

THE LATE VICTORIAN ROMAN CATHOLIC PERIODICAL PRESS AND ATTITUDES TO THE ‘PROBLEM OF THE POOR’

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY

September 2001

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the attitudes of the Roman Catholic periodical press of the late Victorian period to 'the problem of the poor' and various responses to it, including Socialism and Trades Unionism. The study is confined to the English press and to five periodicals: the *Tablet*, a weekly newspaper and unofficial voice of the clergy; the *Dublin Review*, a prestigious quarterly; the *Month*, the organ of the Jesuits in England; the *Downside Review*, issued termly and an important voice of old Catholicism; and *Merry England*, a social and literary monthly magazine.

The study, after briefly establishing the provenance of the periodicals against the background of wider press expansion, and 'the problem of the poor' as was brought before the reading public, examines the reactions of the Catholic writers to the new responses to poverty. The ways attitudes changed over the course of two decades, and the extent to which the writers reached a common response, are explored.

In the course of this exploration, the great extent to which the Catholic writers, in their thinking on possible practical 'solutions' to the problem of the poor, were influenced by an idealisation of the charitable roles of the trades guilds and monasteries of the Middle Ages is demonstrated. It is shown how this formed part of a reluctance to realise fully and take into account the many significant ways in which society had changed - a fact also demonstrated here by an examination of the journals' attitudes to the rise of 'democracy' and 'levelling' attitudes.

The study looks behind the reputation of Cardinal Manning - a spokesman of considerable prestige among wider English society and Catholics in other countries - to show how the urgency and radicalism of his message on the social question was muffled and diluted in the English Catholic journals.

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Introduction

(i)

Any glance at the non-Catholic press of the late Victorian era would be liable to leave the reader with a wholly inaccurate view of the Roman Catholic attitude to the poor, because of the attention paid to the work and teaching of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, on the social question. Manning was not only far and away the most prominent Catholic writer and thinker on the 'the problem of the poor', but also a well-known spokesman on the subject outside his own Church. This study, therefore, is first and foremost an attempt to get behind the views of Manning, and - by a scrutiny of five important Catholic periodicals - to establish where and how far the writers arrived at a consensus, and the ways in which they differed from the views of their celebrated Cardinal Archbishop. It seeks to demonstrate that the majority of Catholic writers, far from sharing Manning's 'radicalism', lacked his sense of the urgency and centrality of the problem of the poor for their Church; that Manning's views, which aroused much controversy in the non-Catholic press, were muffled and diluted in the Catholic journals; and that in particular, Manning's optimism for rising democracy was not shared by the majority of the Catholic writers. The study also examines the great extent to which the Catholic writers, in their thinking on possible solutions to the problem of the poor, were influenced by an idealisation of the charitable roles of the trades guilds and monasteries of the Middle Ages. At the same time, changes and developments in attitudes across the two decades are explored.

The study begins with a brief outline of the Catholic periodicals of this era. They are placed in the context both of English Catholicism forty years after Emancipation, and of the wider press expansion of the age. The provenances of the five journals under particular scrutiny here - the weekly *Tablet*, unofficial voice of the clergy; the prestigious quarterly *Dublin Review*; the Jesuit *Month*; the *Downside Review*, issued termly by St Gregory's Abbey; and the social and literary monthly magazine *Merry England* - are established. Chapter One then concludes with a brief overview of the 'problem of the poor' and the way in which it was presented to the middle and upper-class public, especially with the alarm expressed over the 'housing crisis' of the 1880s and 'sweated labour' in the 1890s. The study then turns, in Chapter Two, to an examination of the Catholic preoccupation with the

social institutions of medieval 'Merrie England', particularly the trades guilds and monastic charity, and seeks both to show how this preoccupation arose from disquiet over increasing calls for state intervention, and how - while affording some unexpected common ground with English Socialism - it flourished at the expense of concentration on more modern aspects of the problem. Chapter Three explores the contribution made by Charles Stanton Devas, the only contemporary Roman Catholic political economist of real note, to the debate: shows how far his views were endorsed by consensus; and especially, how his views on immutability of the established order and his reaction to the advance of democracy mirrored the majority of the Catholic writers.

In Chapter Four, Catholic attitudes to self-help, experimentation by enlightened employers, co-operation, and 'old' and 'new' trades unionism, are examined, in the light of the preoccupation with the Medieval age already explored in earlier chapters. The continuing narrowness of the debate, including the tendency of the writers to concentrate on large employers and especially on the 'factory model' - in all its contrast to the Medieval 'golden age' - is demonstrated. Chapter Five shows how the Catholic writers failed to keep pace in their understanding of the developments in Socialistic theory and, more importantly still, how they failed to engage in a clear and cogent debate: not least because of their failure to establish what was intended by terms such as 'Socialism' or 'the poor'. This failure undermined their arguments and contributed to the dearth of more constructive or forward-looking debate, particularly on the crucial question of when social legislation became 'Socialistic'. In Chapter Six, it is argued that Pope Leo XIII's most important pronouncement on the problem of the poor, the 1891 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, rather than stimulating and concentrating Catholic social effort, in fact served to contribute to the stagnation of the debate.

In Chapter Seven, the roles of an important lay social worker, James Britten, and a clerical writer and thinker, William Barry, are scrutinised in their context of the wider controversy over what has been called 'Christianization versus Civilization'. What, with regard to the poor, was the duty of the Catholic laity? Were lay Catholics under an obligation to demonstrate concern for the physical, as well as spiritual, well-being of the poor, and if so, could this duty be discharged by traditional almsgiving? Would better living and working conditions make the poor more likely or less likely to attend to their religious duties?

Lastly, the concluding chapter looks at the picture at the end of this period, and attempts to summarise the ways in which attitudes on the 'problem of the poor' had changed over the course of two decades, and where - as with lingering antipathy to state intervention on socio-economic matters - they were largely unaltered.

(ii)

In one sense, there was no 'problem of the poor' for the writers of the Roman Catholic periodicals in late Victorian England. Pauperism, urban slums, religious indifference, and socialism, had all been inflicted on the working classes by Protestantism and its creation - unbridled capitalism. When, and only when, there was a national and wholehearted return to Roman Catholicism, then mass misery and want would disappear. This prevailing view was summed up in the opening lines of an article for the *Month*: 'The world is sick, and refuses its only remedy'.¹ The image of sickness was a telling one: all other theories and expedencies were at best palliatives, which could do little good and might do harm, while a perfect cure was available. This was the one great axiom to which the Catholic writers clung while the debate on 'the social question' raged throughout wider society during the 1880s and 90s.

Seeking to defend this case; rehearsing and reiterating their arguments against Socialism; attempting to decide what in the short term should and could be done for the poor - and especially, by the poor - preoccupied the Roman Catholic writers throughout the last two decades of the century. Only the 'Irish question' with all its related issues, and the struggle against secular state education, received more press attention. (It was not, of course, the Catholic press alone that was preoccupied with Ireland. Affairs in Ireland dominated English politics in the 1880s, outweighing the social question and all other domestic issues). Other matters might temporarily engross one of the journals under consideration: the *Tablet*, for example, was at various times preoccupied with subjects as diverse as the publicity surrounding the 'escaped nun' Ellen Golding; the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill; and St George Mivart's gradual departure from orthodoxy. Yet no other subject was

¹ Albany James Christie, 'Catholic Reform', *Month*, January 1884, p.37. (The *Month*, the *Dublin Review*, the *Tablet* and *Merry England* were all published in London; the *Downside Review* was edited at Downside Abbey, with no place of publication cited. No publishing company is named for this period for any of the five journals under consideration. The month and year of publication have been cited for

afforded the weight given to the Irish question, to education, and to the 'problem of the poor'.

As the *Dublin Review* of January 1889 acknowledged, Cardinal Manning had 'the popular ear', appearing frequently in Protestant and Free-thinking print.² Manning's social views, which aroused controversy among Catholics and non-Catholics alike, were more widely aired and discussed in the secular, non-Catholic press than in the Catholic: in his letters and articles in (for example) the *Times*, the *St James's Gazette*, and the *Nineteenth Century*, where he made clear his stance on the right to work or bread, his feelings on strikes and on emigration, and his hopes for the extension of democracy. His declaration, for example - in an article in 1887 for the *American Quarterly Review*, on 'The Law of Nature, Divine and Supreme' - that as man's natural right to life prevailed over all laws of property, so a starving man eating enough of his neighbour's bread to save his life did not commit theft, was greeted as dangerously radical by the *Times* and by other commentators.³ Dr William Barry observed that Manning's decisive intervention in the Dock Strike of 1889 had been more widely acknowledged by Protestants and others than by Catholics.⁴ Newsome has remarked that Manning's lecture on 'The Dignity and Rights of Labour' (given to the Leeds Mechanics' Institute in January 1874 and later published) which he has described as Manning's 'manifesto' of social Catholicism, sent 'a shockwave through the respectable and propertied classes, in both his own Church and the Establishment'.⁵ However Cardinal Manning, in his attitude to 'the social question', was typical only of himself; he represented no 'movement' or 'group' within the Catholic Church. In the Reverend Hughes's much quoted words, Manning 'lit up with a splendid, contrasting, solitary flare the long waste of his Catholic contemporaries' general indifference to the question of social rights'.⁶ The most striking feature of the leading Catholic periodicals is the extent to which they bear out the Reverend Hughes's judgment. If any one fact emerges more clearly than all others from a close examination of their treatment of 'the social question' it is that Manning's was

the *Dublin Review* (a quarterly), the *Month and Merry England* (monthlies) and the *Downside Review* (termly), while for the weekly *Tablet* the day, month and year have of course been cited).

² In a review of *Miscellanies* by Henry Edward, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the third (final) volume of which was published in 1888. *Dublin Review* (hereafter '*Dublin*'), January 1889, p.191

³ In addition to the above-named periodicals, articles by Manning appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, *Murray's Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *North American Review*, among others.

⁴ In 'The Church and the Social Revolution', *Dublin*, October 1890.

⁵ David Newsome, *The Convert Cardinals*, (1993), pp.148, 328

⁶ Rev. Philip Hughes, 'The Coming Century', p.27, in A. Beck, (ed) *The English Catholics 1850-1950* (1950).

almost entirely a lone voice amongst both priesthood and laity. Manning wrote widely in the Catholic press on many subjects: the *Tablet*, for example, commenting on the 'Cardinal Manning' number of *Merry England*⁷ published in May 1886 recognised 'that willing and prized service which in the shape of articles, signed and unsigned, the Cardinal Archbishop has so often rendered to the cause of Catholicism through these columns'.⁸ However, his message on 'the problem of the poor' was muffled in the Catholic press, appearing through the filter of doubt and even dismay felt by the editors, writers and readers for his radicalism. In the *Tablet*, the clearest exposition of Manning's social views lay in the 'fine print', the section at the back of the paper which dealt with news from the dioceses, and which therefore reported the Cardinal Archbishop's speeches on a wide range of subjects. In many cases distrust of Manning's social views was allied to concerns about other issues such as his Ultramontanism or his Anglican background. Moreover, as McClelland, Newsome et al have emphasised,⁹ Manning's social radicalism dated from his Anglican days - a fact by no means lost on his Catholic contemporaries. Overseas, it was a very different picture. As Newsome has observed, Cardinal Moran in Australia, Bishop Ketteler in Germany and Cardinal Capecepatro in Italy all, among others, spoke admiringly of Manning's social teachings and spoke in terms similar to his own.¹⁰ In addressing the twelfth conference of the *Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques d'ouvriers* in 1884, the leading French Catholic layman Comte de Mun cited Manning's lecture on 'The Dignity and Rights of Labour' ten years before as a major influence on his thinking.¹¹ In America, the influential Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore was an ardent follower of Manning on the social question.

The *Month* and the *Tablet*, commenting in 1890 on the silver jubilee of Manning's consecration as Archbishop of Westminster, referred to his place on the Royal Commissions on the Housing of the Poor, and on Education, and his work for the cause of temperance, but made no comment on his teachings on wider social issues.¹² Similarly a commemorative article in the *Month*¹³ shortly after the Cardinal's death concentrated on

⁷ *Merry England*, May 1886.

⁸ *Tablet*, 1/5/1886 p.6

⁹ V. Alan. McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence 1865-92* (1962), pp.18-22, and Newsome, *op. cit.*, pp.328-334

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.330

¹¹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 28/6/1884, p.1006

¹² Anon, 'The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster', in the *Month*, August 1890.

¹³ Rev. John Morris FSA, 'The Cardinal Archbishop' in the *Month*, February 1892.

the less controversial side of Manning's work on the social question, dwelling on temperance and the provision of orphanages but not mentioning, for example, the Dock Strike of 1889 in which the Cardinal had played a pivotal role. Yet Manning during the last few years of his life gave more and more weight to the problem of the poor. Eighteen months after the Cardinal's death 'A Priest' wrote to the *Tablet* commenting on the publication of *Le Cardinal Manning et Son Action Sociale*: 'We don't realize how much clergy and laity abroad have gathered up the words and actions of the late Cardinal ... we at home have forgotten a little'.¹⁴ In the *Historisch-politische Blätter* of September 1892, reviewed in the *Dublin*, Fr Zimmerman compared Manning as a social reformer with Carlyle, Ruskin, and Kingsley.¹⁵ The general response of the Catholic press to Manning's intervention in the 1889 Dock Strike was generally one of welcoming the demonstration it gave of the prestige accorded by non-Catholics to the leader of the Church in England while maintaining their reservations about his involvement. It is noticeable that where praise was given for Cardinal Manning's 'social work' by English commentators, it came from lay social workers in direct contact with the poor, especially from James Britten and from Henry D. Harrod; the latter remarking in the *Dublin* that the 'Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster has perhaps the greatest knowledge of the poor and their wants of any man in England'.¹⁶

Looking back in later life, the journalist and editor Wilfrid Meynell wrote that Manning in his social policies had been fifty years ahead of his time. In some cases this was literally true, in that many of the policies which were so controversial when advocated by Manning in the 1870s and 1880s - the authorisation of the expenditure of local government funds on public works for the relief of unemployment; old-age pensions; Labour Exchanges; and Unemployment and Health Insurance - became embodied in law in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the late Victorian Catholic Church in England Manning was controversial in having social 'policies' at all. If the Catholic Church was, belatedly and to a very limited extent, moved to something like social action in the 1890s, it was never converted to 'Manningism' or to radicalism in any other form. Above all, it was never whole-heartedly convinced of the need for social legislation. Even the 1891 Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, perceived by both contemporary and modern commentators as

¹⁴ *Tablet*, 8/7/1893, p.64

¹⁵ 'Notes on Social Science', *Dublin*, January 1893, p.186

¹⁶ 'The Royal Commission and the Homes of the Poor', *Dublin*, July 1885, p.103

imbued with Manningism and as setting the seal on Manning's achievements in the social field, seems as much to have served to encourage complacency and inertia as to have challenged them.

In one sense at least, the obfuscation of Manning's social message in the Catholic journals is useful: it facilitates a study such as this, which attempts to examine the opinions of the lesser-known Catholic writers in the field to the 'problem of the poor' and to the new responses arising to meet the problem.

Chapter 1

Background

(i): The Roman Catholic periodicals of the late Victorian period

The Roman Catholic press saw its share of the great press expansion which had begun in the mid-Victorian period and continued throughout this era. Daily, weekly, evening and Sunday papers, pitched at all levels of education, became available to all but the poorest or most rural readers; even the illiterate could enjoy the pictorials. Given the comparatively small number of educated Catholics in England, the breadth and variety of the Catholic contribution was impressive. As well as the national Catholic papers, there were successful regional ones, especially in the Catholic strongholds of the north-west: while Irish and American Catholic magazines, such as the *Irish Catholic*, were also circulated in England. Smaller magazines, of local or specialist appeal - such as diocesan magazines or those of Guilds or societies - began to emerge, and were often touched on in the major periodicals under discussion, especially in the 'Magazines' section of the *Month's* Literary Record, and in the *Dublin Review's* 'Review of Books'. Among those mentioned were the Catholic Truth Society's own *Catholic Magazine* (begun 1895); the *St Andrew's Magazine* (begun 1876); *Catholic Household* (begun 1887); the *Marygold* (for 'older Catholic children', begun 1892); *Pastoralia: A Monthly Journal for Priests* (begun 1891); the *League of the Cross Magazine* (with articles on temperance and kindred subjects, thrift, and the working of Catholic clubs); and the *Catholic Temperance Magazine* (until 1887). The influence of the press in the forming of views was immense: indeed, as Altholz has observed, the periodical press became at this time the most extensive and important medium for the discussion of religion.¹⁷ The first three Archbishops of Westminster, Cardinals Wiseman, Manning and Vaughan, all recognised the importance of the Catholic press and were themselves enthusiastic proprietors, supporters and writers. Cardinal Vaughan, while Bishop of Salford, remarked that it was the duty of Catholics to avail themselves as much as possible of the services of the Catholic Press, and that those who had not had the benefit of years of collegiate education should complete and continue their education through the Press.¹⁸ O'Neil has suggested that Cardinal Vaughan's experience of the influence of the press during his visit to America in 1865, his father's observations of the efforts of the

¹⁷ Josef L. Altholz, *The religious Press in Britain 1760-1900* (1988), p.1

¹⁸ In his *Notes and Commentary to The Christian Constitution of States by Leo the Thirteenth: A Manual of Catholic Politics*, reviewed in the *Month*, April 1886, p.580

Roman Catholic press in France in the 1850s, and his own long friendship with William George Ward all combined to impress on him the importance of an effective Catholic press in England.¹⁹

With the exception of the *Downside Review*, all five periodicals under consideration here aimed at a national readership. It is noticeable, however, that they show some signs of being weighted in their coverage towards a concentration on London. (This, of course, was a leaning confined neither to Catholic journalism nor to the late Victorian period. Moreover London, by far the world's largest city, exerted a unique fascination in terms of the problem of the poor. It is, however, pertinent in that the section of the working classes on whom many Catholic writers chose to concentrate - the skilled elite - were visible in the metropolis to an unusual degree). The various strongholds of Catholic population had their own newspapers, which did not strive for national circulation but remained important within their own regions. Scotland had its own press, with the most important journal of this era being the *Glasgow Observer*, begun in 1885. The north-west of England had the *Catholic Times*, founded in 1860 by Father Nugent of Liverpool, which had merged in 1870 with the *Northern Press*, and which, more than any other English Catholic journal, concentrated on the cause of Home Rule. There were also Catholic papers on a still more local level, such as Preston's *Catholic News*, a penny weekly founded in 1889; and the various local editions of Charles Diamond's *Catholic Herald*.

Despite this expansion, there remained significant gaps in the Roman Catholic 'coverage'. As the *Month* regretted, English Catholics had no entirely literary periodical such as the German *Litterarische Rundschau*.²⁰ Nor, despite the level of attention paid to the social questions in the 1880s and 1890s, did English Catholics have a journal entirely dedicated to political and economic issues, as American Catholics had in their *Political Science Quarterly*, the Italian Catholics had in the *Rivisti Internazionale de Scienze Sociali*,²¹ and the French in their *La Réforme Sociale* (after 1886, *La Science Sociale*), produced by the supporters of M. Le Play. Even more significantly, the English Catholic press provided no

¹⁹ Robert O'Neil MHM, *Cardinal Herbert Vaughan*, (1995), p.180

²⁰ Reviews, *Month*, May 1892, p.152

²¹ Begun in January 1893, this was 'a social science review of extreme vigour and competence ... published monthly scarce a mile from the Vatican, and forming three large volumes a year, each of over 600 pages, devoted to social questions'. Devas, "Catholic Socialism", *Dublin*, October 1895, p.120.

paper which might attract the 'penny periodical' readership away from the wide range of secular (and frequently, Socialistic) papers available.

James Britten noted and regretted this lack in a review of working-class Catholic reading habits in 'Catholic Lending Libraries', in the *Month*: '... we have no literature which appeals to the class who support the penny papers ... the *Catholic Fireside* is only a monthly; the *Lamp* is weekly; but does not touch quite the same set ...'.²² This was something of an understatement. The *Lamp* (founded 1850) had been owned and edited from 1862 to 1871 by Mrs Fanny Margaret Taylor (later Mother Magdalen Taylor, founder of the *Month*), and sold in 1871 to the convert Mrs Lockhart. It was 'devoted to the Religious, Moral, Physical and Domestic Improvement of the Industrious Classes' and exhorted the middle-classes to help the poor. Typical contents included short, instructive, factual pieces and 'improving' fiction and poetry. The *Catholic Fireside*, founded in 1879, in addition to being 'only a monthly' was purely a devotional magazine. 'Meanwhile', Britten warned, the Catholic working-classes were at risk from such papers as the '*Freethinker* ... such things are brought into factories or workshops where all kinds of lads are employed'.²³ There was in fact one successful cheap weekly Catholic newspaper - the *Universe*, which had begun in 1860 as the only Catholic penny paper (the *Tablet* then cost 6d) and which was owned and controlled, with as Altholz has said, 'a very firm hand' by a layman, Denis Lane.²⁴ (Like the *Tablet*, it has survived into the twenty-first century). Britten does not refer to the *Universe* in this context. While it paid great attention to the social question from early on - Mayor quotes an editorial of 1/4/1865 which stated that the solution to the social crisis was 'either Catholicism, or socialism, disorder, plunder, and ruin' - its tone was resolutely conservative and paternalistic.²⁵ Britten, as a social worker 'at the coal face' would have realised that it was not calculated to vie for readers with the likes of the *Freethinker* or Blatchford's *Clarion*. As Mayor has observed, this was also true for the other Churches: their interesting weekly papers tended to concentrate on criticising other denominations, while the remainder were scholarly but dull.²⁶ There was in fact a Catholic newspaper aimed at the Catholic members of the new era of urban democracy. In 1884, Charles Diamond, inspired by Cardinal Manning, published the

²² 'Catholic Lending Libraries', *Month*, February 1886, p.208

²³ *Ibid.*, p.208-212

²⁴ Altholz, *op. cit.*, p.105

²⁵ Stephen Mayor, *The Churches and the Labour Movement* (1967), p.74

²⁶ Mayor, *op. cit.*, p.27

weekly *Catholic Herald*, and continued to publish it for the next fifty years. The *Herald* - which was not a truly national paper but was published in various local editions, led by the *London Catholic Herald* - was only part of the publishing empire built up by Diamond, the controversial Irish-born radical Home Ruler and MP. The wider group included the very successful *Glasgow Observer*. The *Herald's* politics were too radical for the majority of English Catholics and the paper did not achieve mass-circulation until the 1930s. It has therefore been omitted from the present study, which sets out to establish and examine the most representational views of the era, the attitudes held by the majority of those who wrote for the mainstream Catholic periodicals. The *Universe* has also been omitted; an examination of the *Universe* alongside the *Tablet*, however instructive, would leave no room in a study of this length to examine the most important Catholic quarterly (the *Dublin Review*) and monthly (the *Month*). The *Tablet* has been included at the expense of the *Universe*. The former, as suggested by the price, was more 'popular' than the *Tablet*, out-selling it by the end of this period; but the *Tablet* was universally acknowledged as the unofficial voice of the clergy, and it was the clergy, not the laity, who controlled the Church in England after the restoration of the hierarchy. It was mostly from the clergy, rather than the laity, that the journals drew their writers and commentators. Lay contributors like the economist Devas and the social workers Britten and Harrod were the exceptions rather than the rule.

The Catholic periodicals often closely paralleled their secular rivals. The most heavyweight, the quarterly *Dublin Review*, aimed at intellectual parity with the *Edinburgh Review*, on which it modelled itself - and which had inspired its name: the *Dublin Review* was always published in London and as O'Neil has observed, the name formed a challenge to the *Edinburgh Review* which was strongly anti-Catholic in tone.²⁷ The *Dublin Review* (1836-1969) was founded by Cardinal Wiseman whilst he was still rector of the English College in Rome. It was passed to Bishop Vaughan in 1878 as a gift from William George Ward, and remained under his control throughout the late-Victorian period. Several innovations were made at the start of the *Dublin's* third series in 1880, including the introduction of a large number of foreign contributors, and the expansion of the book and magazine reviews to include foreign Catholic periodicals and regular science notes. It is a sign of the weight which had begun to be given to the social question that from January 1892 the 'Science Notes' were joined by regular 'Notes on Social Science' - usually

written by Devas. The flyleaf to the concluding (31st) volume of the Second Series stated: ‘... In order to render the *Review* the more interesting, all the articles will be signed with the names of the writers’. This, practice, was, unfortunately, not strictly adhered to, although during the 1880s and 1890s signed articles became the rule rather than the exception in all the journals under consideration. Articles in *Merry England*, the *Downside Review*, the *Month*, and the *Tablet* were usually, but by no means invariably, signed. The *Month*, especially, was inconsistent in this respect. For example, three major linked articles on Socialism by Fr Joseph Rickaby SJ appeared in February, March and April 1898: the first two signed in full ‘Joseph Rickaby SJ’; the last one, simply ‘JR’. The authorship is obvious: this and similar inconsistencies seem to have been unintentional rather than attempts to conceal authorship.²⁸ Similar inconsistencies occur in the *Dublin Review*, which sometimes gave the name of Devas, for example, in full, but elsewhere as ‘CSD’, ‘CD’, and just ‘D’, while several anonymous reviews read as though they were his work. While both Devas and Manning were known to feel that as a general rule articles and reviews should be signed, due to vagaries of policy and habit among the journals unsigned articles by both continued to appear.

Bishop Vaughan’s chosen editor of the *Dublin Review*, Fr Cuthbert Hedley, became a bishop in 1881 and resigned the editorship in 1884. Vaughan then became editor, but an assistant, Fr W.E. Driffield, was effectively the acting editor especially towards the end of the 1880s. In early 1892 (at the beginning of the fourth series) the editorship was conferred on the Very Rev. James Moyes DD, who had been a teacher at St Bede’s, Manchester, the commercial college founded by Vaughan while he was Bishop of Salford. Dr (later Monsignor) Moyes, who became Canon Theologian of Westminster, also made contributions to other journals. He remained in charge of the *Dublin* throughout this period but always, it seems, under Vaughan’s scrutiny. An editorial tribute to Cardinal Vaughan after his death (in June of that year) remarked:

‘In the conducting of this Review he did not content himself with being merely its proprietor. He exercised a constant supervision, and most helpful general direction in the works of its editing ... In the midst of his manifold activities, he kept himself in touch with contemporary thought. He took care that the chief publications of the day, and the leading articles in the leading reviews, should come within his

²⁷ O’Neil, *op. cit.*, p.178

²⁸ In several instances where articles appeared above initials and the authorship has not been obvious, the full name appeared in the Index to the *Month* which was produced in 1909.

cognisance, and he was quick to grasp their trend and their bearing upon the unique standard which he had ever before his mind, and by which he measured all things: “the interests of Jesus Christ” ... Hence, also, his appreciation of the value of the press as an aid and apostolate in the work of Christ’.²⁹

The *Dublin Review* stands out among the Roman Catholic periodicals at this time for the variety of backgrounds and opinions of its writers, not least on the social question. This was a breadth unobtainable by the *Month*, the organ in England of the Society of Jesus, which was always edited, and largely written, by members of the Order. It was edited by Fr Henry Coleridge SJ from 1865 to 1882, then by Fr Richard Clarke SJ until the beginning of 1894; and then Fr John Gerard SJ FLS until 1912, except for the three years of his Provincialate (1897-1900) when Fr Sydney Smith SJ was acting Editor. Nonetheless, the *Month* did accept some contributions from the laity. A shilling monthly,³⁰ it was not as ‘heavyweight’ as the *Dublin Review*, but was nevertheless literary and cultivated, closely resembling the *Cornhill Magazine*. Its founder (in 1864) and proprietor was Mrs Taylor, of the *Lamp*, but it was supported and directed by the Jesuit Fathers from the outset, and they took formal control in July 1865. It was a propitious moment for the introduction of a new Catholic ‘monthly’, as there was a gap left by the recent demise (1862) of the *Rambler*, which had been the organ of the liberal movement within the Church and as such was a casualty of the prevailing Ultramontanism.³¹ As Altholz has observed, the *Month* achieved ‘some scholarly and controversial distinction ... Farm Street was known as the “Scriptorium” with priests assigned there primarily to write for Jesuit publications. The editors were closely supervised by Jesuit provincials’.³² If the *Dublin*’s special strength was the breadth of background of its contributors, the *Month*’s lay in its insight - via a network of brother Jesuits abroad - into the course of foreign affairs. In particular there are glimpses to be seen of how ‘the problem of the poor’ was dealt with in the continental Catholic press. The *Month* gives a clear impression of the amount of time and attention paid to the subject in continental and American Roman Catholic periodicals. The magazines most regularly referred to included the *Catholic Quarterly Review* (USA); *La Science Sociale* (France); *La Réforme Sociale* (France); *Vingtième Siècle* (France); *Agosto*

²⁹ *Dublin*, October 1903 (unnumbered pages).

³⁰ As the number of pages in the *Month* expanded, its price rose to 2s and then 2s 6d. In 1897 the size was reduced and the price returned to 1s.

³¹ The monthly *Rambler* was turned into a quarterly, the *Home and Foreign Review* and as such was for a short while a rival of the *Dublin*. However publication ceased in 1864 as a direct result of the papal condemnation of the principle of freedom of scholarship, the principle which Sir John (later Lord) Acton and his co-proprietors of the *Home and Foreign Review* had defended. Altholz, *op. cit.*, pp.102-103

(Italy); *Political Science Quarterly* (USA, non-Catholic); *Katholik* (German); and especially, the four Jesuit journals, *Études* (France); *Civiltà Cattolica* (Italy); *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach* and *Historisch-politische Blätter* (Germany). These last four were routinely and carefully monitored, and the key articles summarised in the *Month*.

The *Downside Review*, first issued in July 1880, had the smallest readership of the five journals under consideration. It was the organ of the Benedictine community of St Gregory's, at Downside, near Bath. (Invariably known as 'Downside', this was at first a priory, and was in 1899 raised by Pope Leo XIII to abbatial rank). The *Downside Review*'s opening editorial stated that the publication was 'undertaken in the interests of the College of St Gregory's at large, and in those of the St Gregory's Society in particular', as a medium for the furtherance of their objects, 'and to serve as a record of the present time and of past history, so far as regards that Alma Mater'. It was addressed to the 'old boys' and intended to be almost exclusively their work. Three issues appeared each year, at an annual subscription of 5s, with individual issues also available. A retrospective in March 1907 referred to the first editor, Mr Alfred Maskell FSA, (editor July 1880 to Sept 1884) as 'the moving spirit in the foundation of the *Review*', but it seems to have been the creation, at least in part, of the Prior of St Gregory's, Fr Aidan Gasquet, who edited the journal himself for three numbers (Autumn 1884, Easter and Summer 1885).³³ The *Downside Review* began as a private venture, but was acquired by the Society of St Gregory in 1882. School, college and seminary magazines were not new - the *Edmundian*, *Ushaw Magazine*, and the *Oscotian* had been founded early in the century - and the *Downside*'s expressed aims were equally modest. An early editorial remarked '... It is not by any means our first aim to gain the ear of the public at large'.³⁴ The circulation was also modest and it was a struggle to cover costs. In January 1885 its editor appealed for more subscribers and the *Downside* was in the hands of no fewer than seven different printers between 1880-1905, possibly in attempts to economise. In 1890, for example, it sold 400 copies per issue. It was nonetheless important as a voice of 'old Catholicism' and has been included here for that reason. The majority of those who wrote for, and read, the *Downside Review* were from the most influential Catholics families.

³² *Ibid.*, p.105

³³ Fr Gasquet was succeeded in the editorial chair by Fr E Ford (at that time Prior) for three issues, then Dom Thomas Lee Almond (nos.18-38); Dom Percy Ethelbert Horne (no 39); Dom Henry Wilfrid New (nos. 40-56 ie up to 1900); then Dom Thomas Lee Almond again (nos. 57-75).

³⁴ Editorial, *Downside Review*, April 1884, p.136

A leading editorial of January 1883 observed:

‘The cause of failure of similar publications to ours is often the attempt at general literature, for which, as a rule, there can be no excuse in the pages of a magazine which may be called a “class” publication. For instance, when we find in them some vapid réchauffé on the late Lord Beaconsfield, or a “Tour in France”, or “Lines to a Butterfly”, we may be pretty sure that such publications would not be “worth paying for”...’.³⁵

These critical remarks may have been directed at a number of contemporary journals: a few months later, they might have been aimed at *Merry England*, the first number of which was about to appear (May 1883) and which contained just such a mixture of poems and articles, even including a retrospective (by George Saintsbury) on Lord Beaconsfield and the ‘Young England’ Movement. The *Downside Review* itself, while remaining largely tied to matters of direct interest to the college, soon became more eclectic in content, but remained largely concerned with theology, philosophy, and monastic history.

Merry England was certainly very unlike the *Downside Review*, and was in many ways out of the normal run of Roman Catholic journals. An illustrated monthly, it was edited, throughout its twelve-year run (1883-1895), by Wilfrid and Alice Meynell, husband and wife and both converts. The Meynells contributed not only to their own but to other periodicals (Roman Catholic and otherwise) including the *Pen*, and the *Lamp*, for which Wilfrid Meynell was sub-editor during the 1870s. Alice Meynell was a distinguished and widely published essayist and poet, seen, on the death of Lord Tennyson in 1892, as a possible candidate for the Laureateship. She also wrote a weekly article for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Wilfrid Meynell wrote regularly for the *Tablet* (usually under one of his various pseudonyms), founded the *Catholic Who's Who*, became (in 1905) Managing Director of the Catholic publishing firm of Burns and Oates, was deputy editor of the *Dublin* during the First World War, and in 1945 was made a CBE for his services to literature. Like many Victorian periodicals both religious and secular, *Merry England* was very largely the reflection of its proprietor-editors’ own views. It was by far the most secular of the periodicals, with contributions drawn largely from the laity. Moreover, many of its contributors were non-Catholics (although tending to belong to a literary circle drawn towards Catholicism, and many of whom did later convert), and *Merry England* can be

³⁵ *Downside Review*, January 1883, p.136

described as more broadly 'Christian' than 'Catholic' in its tone. Its sales never matched its critical acclaim and the journal seems to have expired (early in 1895) without warning, though it is noticeable that the volume of advertisements declined over its last few months. At least in terms of workload, it was not the Meynells' chief project: that was the *Weekly Register*, which largely supported and occupied them for eighteen years (1881-1898). The *Weekly Register* had been running since the 1850s, but in 1881 seems to have been almost moribund when it was rescued by Cardinal Manning and handed over to the Meynells. This was a development which clearly alarmed Bishop Vaughan, the proprietor of the *Tablet*, who wrote to William George Ward: 'To start the W.R. with the programme, the size, the form of *The Tablet*, and to sell it for a halfpenny or half the price, is the American way of clearing rivers of well-established companies - running a boat for nothing till ruin brings an end to competition'.³⁶

Indeed, as to rescue a newspaper known for its associations with the Liberal movement was not an obvious step for Cardinal Manning to have taken, one reasonable conjecture is that he felt that there was the need for a strong rival to the *Tablet* and the *Universe* - both conservative in their socio-political views and their general outlook. Moreover, as Walsh has observed, Manning knew that Wilfrid Meynell could be relied upon to keep the *Weekly Register*, unlike the *Tablet*, thoroughly pro-Home Rule.³⁷ In fact the *Weekly Register* never really challenged its very successful rivals, the *Tablet* and the *Universe*. In 1899 Viola Meynell recorded that the *Weekly Register* ran at an average annual profit of £300 pa, while *Merry England's* profit 'in a typical year', without allowing for an editorial fee, was £37 15s 9d.³⁸ In 1899 the *Weekly Register* passed to Robert Dell, a recent convert, whose social views were even more advanced than those of the Meynells. Under Dell the newspaper quickly became entangled in the Modernist controversy, and within a year it had been passed on to the more moderate Frank Rooke Ley but did not survive beyond 1902 - leaving, as Altholz has remarked, English Catholics without any periodical of theologically liberal inclinations.³⁹ The circumstances surrounding the end of *Merry England* are not so clear: it seems to have petered out, without warning, early in 1895. None of the biographers of the Meynells and Francis Thompson comment on or explain its demise. The *Tablet* had welcomed its inception, commenting that 'Altogether we have reason to be

³⁶ Quoted in O'Neil, *op. cit.* p.335

³⁷ Michael Walsh, *The Tablet 1840-1990: A Commemorative History* (1990), p.21

³⁸ Viola Meynell, *Francis Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell, a Memoir* (1952), p.10

proud of this latest addition to Catholic literature'⁴⁰ and later remarking that the need 'for a non-ecclesiastical magazine for family reading was so apparent, that we now only wonder why it was left so long unsatisfied ...'.⁴¹ The *Tablet* continued to give *Merry England* brief but consistently favourable reviews in its 'Art and Literature' section from time to time; but neither the *Tablet* nor the other journals noted its passing.

It is likely that *Merry England* made too many demands on the Meynells' time and energy: but it is surely also significant that the journal did not long outlive Cardinal Manning.

Wilfrid Meynell was a fervent admirer of Manning and especially of his social views. The Cardinal had made him editor and proprietor of the *Weekly Register*, and *Merry England* was founded with Manning's encouragement, and possibly even at his suggestion. At first Wilfrid Meynell owned it conjointly with Messrs Burns and Oates, but this firm retired from the partnership at the end of the first year, leaving him sole proprietor. The *Weekly Register* (priced at 3d) was a pragmatic publication given over almost entirely to diocesan and parochial events. The Meynells wanted a Catholic magazine which would give room for the expression of their own enthusiasm for art and literature - there was no English Catholic periodical devoted to these subjects. The Meynells held strong views on the importance of art and literature, both for their own sake, and for their influence on the lives of the working-classes: they were in the vanguard of the new moves to brighten the lives of the poor and far in advance of most of their Catholic contemporaries. The list of contributors was certainly an impressive one. Hilaire Belloc made his first appearance in print in *Merry England*, while the 'discovery' by Wilfrid Meynell of Francis Thompson, and the publication of his poems, including 'The Hound of Heaven', in *Merry England* brought the journal increased renown.⁴² The list of prestigious contributors also included Cardinal Manning, Wilfrid Blunt, W.H. Hudson, Coventry Patmore, George Saintsbury, Lionel Johnson, Sir Frederic Leighton and Katherine Tynan. Yet the bulk of the writing, both poetry and prose, was undertaken by Alice Meynell, by Francis Thompson, and by Wilfrid Meynell himself. Elizabeth Butler, Alice Meynell's sister, provided illustrations; her husband, Sir William Butler, contributed historical essays. Late in life, Wilfrid

³⁹ Altholz, *op. cit.*, p.104

⁴⁰ *Tablet*, 24/5/1884, p.811

⁴¹ *Tablet*, 5/6/1886, p.891

⁴² Thompson also contributed poetry and prose to the Meynell's *Weekly Register*. The *Dublin Review* at first rejected his celebrated *Essay on Shelley*, only to publish it posthumously in 1907.

Meynell described the origins of *Merry England* in a letter which reveals what a close concern the journal had been:

‘I felt the need for an organ to put forward Catholic principles especially in regard to the redemption of the workers. Cardinal Manning’s articles were nearly half-a-century ahead of his time. I got three or four friends to help, by putting down one hundred pounds each, to add to mine. One was my brother-in-law, Sir William Butler, and another was the Marquis of Ripon, a convert to the Church, a very typical Englishman and at the time Viceroy of India. We spent little, as there was no editorial fee, and our contributions were many of them voluntary. Besides my pen-name of “John Oldcastle”, to break the monotony I sometimes signed Francis Phillimore and when I edited and adapted two or three anonymous articles published in Catholic magazines a hundred years earlier, I gave them the signature A C Opie (which meant a copy). Looking over some old volumes of *Merry England* I see I used A C Opie also for articles that were [WM’s own] entire work ... “Francis Tancred” and “Francis Phillimore” were also the signatures of FT [Francis Thompson] and Alice Meynell. I forget whether I used Francis Tancred myself ...’⁴³

Wilfrid Meynell may have forgotten, since he does not mention here, that an occasional article also appeared over the name ‘Alice Oldcastle’. The Meynells’ use of pseudonyms seems to have been largely a matter of form and to avoid the too obvious dominance of a journal by its editors. The *Tablet* in its reviews of *Merry England* politely kept up the fiction. Given, for example, that ‘Oldcastle’ was the name of the street in which the Meynells had once lived, it cannot have been a very serious attempt at anonymity.

In addition to reflecting two of the major Catholic preoccupations of the day - the cause of Home Rule, and distaste for the worst effects of unbridled capitalism allied to nostalgia for a happier, more socially cohesive, life before the Reformation - *Merry England* provided the fullest exposition amongst the journals under consideration of Manning’s view on the social question. The entire July 1891 issue was given over to *Letters on the Subjects of the Day* by Manning, edited by Meynell himself under the ‘John Oldcastle’ pseudonym. The February 1892 issue carried a supplement entitled *Memorials of Cardinal Manning* and the March 1892 issue another, entitled *Sayings of Cardinal Manning*; both arranged and edited by ‘John Oldcastle’. Yet despite Wilfrid Meynell’s own comments on his intentions for the magazine, the proportion of content on ‘the problem of the poor’ was not noticeably high; certainly not more so than in the *Dublin Review* or the *Month* during this period. However, where there was social content it was sometimes more radical than in other journals, and

was couched in more trenchant language. More secular than the other periodicals, *Merry England* published material that the others might have rejected as too shocking or otherwise inappropriate. It is difficult to imagine E.M. Lynch's blunt article on the effects of extreme poverty, 'The Cry of the Mothers' (April 1886) appearing elsewhere in the periodicals under consideration, or Alice Meynell's article on infanticide among the very poor, 'Human Instincts: Their Lapse and their Survival' (December 1884).

Merry England was the only Catholic journal into which the 'new realism' in fiction penetrated. It was markedly free from the prudishness exhibited by the *Tablet*. In one of several of her stories depicting in great detail the squalor and hopelessness of slum life to be published in *Merry England*, K. Douglas King,⁴⁴ for example, wrote of :

'the family one-roomed home... Redhill Road is in the Borough, and no more hopeless hell abounds on earth ... She knew what were the lives of most of the women in the Road: and she knew, also, that a lump flung by a drunken husband into her face; a kick of his nailed boot on her prostrate body; his fists in her eyes; and a chair-back on her breasts, do not improve a woman's looks, nor compensate for the bearing of many sickly babies'.⁴⁵

There was another way in which *Merry England* was unusual among Catholic journals - the strength of its 'Ruskinism'. The Roman Catholic writers, as all the contemporary journalists, revealed an awareness, and to various degrees the influence, of John Ruskin. Ruskin's early hostility to Catholicism had over the years gradually worn away; indeed, Hilton has claimed that Alice Meynell looked on Ruskin as 'a potential convert who had got away'.⁴⁶ Moreover, there was much in Ruskin's work which accorded with the traditional Roman Catholic view, especially his remark (in *Unto this Last*) 'that it is not by "science" of any kind that men were ever intended to be set at one';⁴⁷ his paternalistic view of society; his emphasis on the possibilities of guilds, and his belief in the impossibility of 'equality'. There was also plenty of material in Ruskin's work to alarm Catholics, there was (still is) debate among wider intellectual society over whether he was a conservative and individualist or a proto-socialist. *Merry England* was therefore unusual among Catholic journals in being whole-heartedly and overtly pro-Ruskin. Alice Meynell

⁴³ Viola Meynell, *op. cit.*, p.11

⁴⁴ Katharine ('Katie') Douglas King, one of the Meynells' intimate circle.

⁴⁵ 'Lil: an Idyll of the Borough', *Merry England*, May 1894, pp.29-31

⁴⁶ J. Anthony Hilton, 'Ruskin's Influence on English Catholicism', in *Recusant History*, May 2000, p.98

⁴⁷ John Ruskin, *Unto this Last and Other Writings*, Penguin 1985 edition, p.168

produced editions of several of his works, and wrote a *Life* in 1900. In 'Human Instincts: Their Lapse and their Survival' she wrote in Ruskinian terms of '... the peculiar form of pessimism which the overcrowding of the world, the weakness of the average health and vitality, and the cheapness of man in our times have spread abroad in the general heart'.⁴⁸ Two articles describe Ruskin's work - in May 1885, 'A Teacher Among Teachers' by M.C. Bishop, and in February 1884, 'St George for Sheffield!' by Bernard Whelan (an examination of the Guild of St George, founded by Ruskin in 1891); and many others refer to it. The journal's blunt language, and the Meynells' passion for Ruskin, went too far for many. Wilfrid Meynell found it appropriate to include, within a few months of the magazine's inception, a brief message on its politics. He was careful to point out (in the November 1883 issue) that on its first appearance, *Merry England* had been hailed as being both of 'the most advanced Social-Radical type' and a 'Conservative magazine'. Its editor claimed the magazine had no politics at all, 'in the party sense of the term but was for "Social Reform"'. It aimed to restore 'Merry England'

'... to modern and unlovely life - by what legislation, by the exercise of what charitable effort, and by the promulgation of what principles of sincerity - we have set ourselves to discuss: in truth, with a fixed purpose; yet without a tiresome continuity which would exclude the lighter topics of literature and art, fiction and biography, in poetry and in prose'.⁴⁹

By 1880, the *Tablet*, the fifth journal and the only 'weekly' under consideration here, had established itself as the leading Roman Catholic weekly newspaper and effectively the unofficial organ of the clergy, being the usual forum for the publication of papal and episcopal pronouncements. It comprised news, leading articles, letters, notes, and reviews of books and journals. On its inception in 1840, its declared aims were 'The advocacy of all Catholic right; the pursuit of justice and truth, independently of any political party; and the maintenance of lawful authority and social order'. Herbert Vaughan, as owner and publisher of the *Tablet* and the *Dublin Review*, held effective control of two of the three most important Catholic journals in England of this period, the third being the *Month*; all three journals reflected a more conservative social outlook than Manning's *Weekly Register*. Gunnin has observed that all three conservative journals 'viewed poverty and inequality as inevitable, working-class demonstrations as ungodly, and Christian charity as

⁴⁸ 'Human Instincts: Their Lapse and their Survival', *Merry England*, December 1884, pp.113-114

⁴⁹ 'Reviews and Views', *Merry England*, November 1883, p.59

an adequate solution to social problems'.⁵⁰ While the first of these points was never challenged by Catholics of this era, the last two did become qualified.

The close relationship between the *Tablet* and the *Dublin* was apparent, the one often referring to the other as though a shared readership, at least in part, was assumed. Vaughan purchased the *Tablet* for £900 in 1868 and undertook much of its editing himself until becoming Bishop of Salford in 1872, when the work was passed to sub-editors: at first (until 1884) George Elliot Ranken, a Franciscan tertiary and an old friend of Vaughan, then Vaughan's cousin and future biographer, John George Snead-Cox. When Vaughan became Archbishop of Westminster in 1892, Snead-Cox became editor in name and remained so until 1920. Altholz has described the *Tablet* during the era of Vaughan and Snead-Cox as 'solid, temperate, and politically Conservative'.⁵¹ Vaughan's biographer, O'Neil, cites as evidence of Vaughan's strong grip on the *Tablet* that during the conflict over Infallibility and the First Vatican Council not one letter from the Inopportunist was printed in the *Tablet*, even though Newman and Vaughan's own cousin, Bishop Clifford of Clifton, were in the Inopportunist camp.⁵² Walsh has observed that the paper 'loyally kept in step' with, for example, the developments in Vaughan's thinking on education; and that when making arrangements for control of the *Tablet* after his death, he had stated that its policy should be determined by the Archbishop of Westminster.⁵³

In their early years the various Roman Catholic periodicals had had their differences, generally over doctrinal matters. The 1880s and 1890s, however, saw the periodicals move away from in-fighting. The degree of consensus on most issues was considerable, and perhaps inevitable, given the small numbers of middle and upper-class Catholics in England, and the still smaller - but often talented - pool of writers, professional and otherwise, on which Catholic editors had to draw. The leading writers on the 'social question' were James Britten (*Month*, *Dublin*, *Merry England*, etc) Dr William Barry (*Dublin*, *Tablet*, *Merry England*, etc); Wilfrid Meynell (*Merry England*, *Tablet*, etc) Alice Meynell (*Merry England*, *Dublin*, *Tablet*, etc); Fr Joseph Rickaby SJ (*Month*, *Dublin Review*, *Tablet*, etc); Mgr James Moyes (*Dublin*, *Month*, *Tablet*, etc); John S. Vaughan

⁵⁰ Gerry C. Gunnin, 'John Wheatley, Catholic Socialism, and Irish Labour in the West of Scotland 1906-1924' (1987), p.71

⁵¹ Altholz, *op. cit.*, p.101

⁵² O'Neil, *op. cit.*, p.180

⁵³ Walsh, *op. cit.*, p.25

(*Dublin, Merry England*, etc); Ellen M. Clerke (*Dublin, Tablet*, etc); Fr Cuthbert (*Merry England, Tablet*, etc); Henry D. Harrod (*Month, Dublin*, etc); William S. Lilly (*Dublin, Month, Tablet*, etc); and of course, Charles Stanton Devas (*Month, Dublin, Tablet* etc), and Cardinals Manning and Vaughan. One writer on the social question could dominate a journal, as Devas did the *Dublin Review*; a situation mirrored on the continent where, for example, as is clear from the Reviews section of the *Month*, Fr Victor Cathrein dominated the discussion in the German Jesuit journal, *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*.

On the whole, Catholics could view the Catholic press in England at the start of the 1880s with some satisfaction. Given their small numbers, Catholics had more than held their own in the press expansion. Moreover, their writers were also widely represented in the secular press: so much so by 1899, according to James Britten, as to give rise ‘to perfectly groundless fears on the part of a section of the Protestant public, and has called forth gloomy prophecies and dire vaticinations’.⁵⁴ There was, at any rate, one dissenting voice. In his pamphlet of 1879 on ‘The Shortcomings of the Catholic Press’, (subtitled, ‘Political chastity the fundamental principle of Catholic politics’) Francis Henry Laing, DD, made a searing attack on the Catholic press and its ‘want of self-relying spirit for Catholic defence’. Instead of covering general subjects with the ‘specious plea’ of approaching them from a Catholic angle, Catholic journals should concentrate only on those topics of specifically Catholic interest, such as education. Apart from the little periodical *Catholic Progress*, which was not a major journal, there were, he claimed, few signs ‘of any definite conception of the Church as a political society, bound to defend its own interests, in *its own name*’. If Catholics wanted to save their own, Laing argued, they must do the whole work themselves, ‘without trusting to enemies for its protection’, whether State, or law, or political party. Yet current press policy was the opposite of this: “‘We are not enough for a Catholic Party’” is the craven answer of the representatives of a body of Englishmen, who enjoy more advantages and more call upon them for self-assertion than any other’. Catholics looked in vain to their press ‘for any notion of moderating the onward current of Protestant negation, which congenially lends itself to every movement, destructive of human liberty’.⁵⁵ Catholic journals meekly followed the Protestant treatment of Protestant ideas and for this reason, many readers had given up the Church journals altogether: they had nothing which would distinguish them from the surrounding Babel to offer to ‘that

⁵⁴ ‘Catholic Progress in England’, Pt II, *Month*, August 1899, p.142

⁵⁵ Francis Henry Laing, DD, ‘The Shortcomings of the Catholic Press’, (1879) pp.8-9

class of Catholics, to whom Babel is getting more and more unsatisfactory'. The press, instead of rousing a healthy Catholic feeling, only encouraged the 'political lethargy' general among Catholics:

'They could be made interested, if there were anything to stir them. They were not unwilling to accept an idea about Catholic action, if any such idea were ever offered them. But it never is. No such intimation comes to them. Thus left to themselves they naturally turn, as anyone would, to the first blustering newspaper they fall in with, that assumes to talk, as if it could tell them something: which the Catholic journal would never be so improper as to attempt'.⁵⁶

The Church in England currently acted like 'some crawling heretical "*denomination*" apologising for its very existence to English society', when it should act as it knew itself to be the one Kingdom of God, 'the only one of its kind standing before the world as a public political body in its own native right'.⁵⁷ In order to bring about this state of affairs, it would be necessary for the Catholic journals to risk breaking away from the settled judgment of the English nation, 'that God's law has no business whatever in the world of public affairs'. The press should speak out more against anti-Catholic legislation in France, Italy and Belgium, and at home, against the 'kidnapping' of Catholic children into Protestant orphanages. Dr Laing concluded that, 'The life of *Catholic politics* is a region of activity, which is a yet unvisited by our newspaper instructors, ever in a dream of fancy'. A genuine Catholic journal would pursue its cause with as much singleness of aim, 'as a revolutionary paper pursues a revolution, or a Fenian paper devotes itself to Fenianism...'. It would not take for granted that 'moral responsibility could be taken away from commercial acts', or 'take as an aesthetic principle, the now allowed axiom, that there is no such thing as a *fair price*' for a "commodity"; so that you can never be chargeable with over-reaching, however much you might try to get for it'.⁵⁸

Dr Laing claimed that those who felt as he did found themselves ostracised by the Catholic press: be that as it may, certainly none of the five journals under consideration demonstrate any enthusiasm for the concept of a Catholic 'party' in England and the *Tablet* commented with some derision on, for example, Bishop Bagshawe's support for the idea. It is possible to take issue with many of Dr Laing's points; his case was somewhat one-sided and

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.39-40

perhaps over-stated. By this time, for example, Devas was already making similar points in the press on 'fair prices', and there was to be increasing coverage of the issue of Catholic children being taken into Protestant workhouses. Nevertheless, Dr Laing's criticisms do cast some light on the journals of the 1880s and 1890s. They did, broadly speaking, accept the agenda set by their non-Catholic counterparts, and there is little sense that they were actively examining or rejecting the prevailing mores of contemporary, Protestant England. The latter charge - of a blanket acceptance of the unacceptable - was one of many to be levelled at his fellow-Catholics by Dr Barry in 1890.

(ii): The problem of the poor as it emerged in the 1880s and 1890s

The conditions in which the poorest classes lived and worked were brought before Catholics as relentlessly as before the wider public. It was borne in on them that misery and want existed on a vast scale - existed despite Disraeli's social legislation of the 1870s, which had included various Factory Acts, the first Housing Act and a Public Health Act. Anecdotal accounts of living and working conditions among the poorest classes could be ignored, played down, or perceived as the temporary results of 'bad times' but it was far harder to do this with the attempts to quantify and evaluate the problem 'scientifically' which were being conducted and publicised by a modern breed of pioneering investigative social reporters and journalists.

Perhaps the most pressing concern was the acute shortage of housing for the poor in London and the other great cities, caused by the demolition of some of the worst 'rookeries' without the sufficient provision of alternative housing or affordable transport. The conditions in which many of the working-classes were obliged to live were examined in *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883), publicised by W.T. Stead (son of a Congregational minister) in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This important study - published anonymously, but later known to be the work of the Reverend Andrew Mearns, secretary of the Congregation Union, and W.C. Preston, a fellow Congregationalist - observed that the living conditions of millions of town-dwellers remained virtually as squalid and unhealthy as they had been at the time of the 1833 enquiry into the Poor Law. *The Bitter Cry*, which called for state interference as well as Christian and philanthropic effort, was in part responsible for the appointment of the Royal Commission on Working-Class Housing. It

was reinforced in the same year by Lord Salisbury's report on *Labourers' and Artisans' Dwellings* (1883) and by Octavia Hill's *Homes of the London Poor* (1875, 2nd edition 1883). There were also official digests such as those on the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Acts ('Cross's Acts' and 'Torrens' Acts') and Lodging-Houses Acts. The *Times* reported on 'Out-of-Work London' during February and March 1886; the *British Weekly* commissioners on 'Toilers in London' (1889); the reports of Royal Commissions on Housing, Labour, Agriculture, and 'Sweating' emerged during the eighties and nineties; and Annie Besant publicised conditions at the Bryant and May match factories in the *Link*. T.H.S. Escott showed in *England: its People, Polity and Pursuits* (1879) that conditions in the slums of Manchester and Liverpool were as bad, if not worse, than in those of London. The Reverend Hugh Price Hughes published a series of reports from the Methodist West London Mission, and General Booth of the Salvation Army his *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), the title of which ironically referred to Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*, published in the same year. At the end of this period Seebohm Rowntree's *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901) showed the extent of poverty in a county town apart from the great industrial centres. Probably the most significant work of all, however, was Charles Booth's massive *Life and Labour of the People of London*, published in eighteen volumes 1889-1897, which showed that almost a third of Londoners lived below subsistence standards. It was certainly the one which had most impact on the leading Roman Catholic social thinkers and workers, many of whom in the 1890s were quoting Booth as an unimpeachable authority.

The picture drawn in the factual reports was being supported and expanded by the wave of novels whose 'social realism' or 'naturalism' reflected the influence of Zola. These were widely condemned for indecency, and benefited from the attendant publicity. Urban slum life was described in graphic detail by Arthur Morrison in *Tales of Mean Streets* (London, 1894) and *A Child of the Jago* (London, 1896) and by W. Somerset Maugham in *Liza of Lambeth* (London, 1897). Hardy described rural poverty in *Jude the Obscure* (London, 1895), while Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (London, 1882) showed that even the 'labour aristocracy' lived lives of joyless monotony. George Bernard Shaw's play *Widower's Houses*, which opened in December 1898, ran for only two performances, but with its anti-capitalist message, and a provocative curtain speech on socialism by the

author, provoked over 130 reviews and articles within a fortnight.⁵⁹ The middle and upper-classes were both obliged to confront the existence of distress on an immense and chronic scale (rather than to think in vague and comforting terms of ‘bad times and good’); and to ask how this state of affairs had arisen, and how far it could and should be ameliorated. One of the best-known Catholic lay social workers, James Britten, looking back on this period in a commentary on *Realities at Home* in 1902, remarked that ignorance ‘could no longer be pleaded as an excuse for the indifference which the more fortunate classes manifest as a whole towards their less happily circumstanced brethren; for ignorance, where it exists, can hardly be exempt from culpability’.⁶⁰

The non-Catholic and secular press covered the problem of the poor extensively and the Catholic press could not feel itself to be doing less. Indeed, as so many of the very poor were Roman Catholics, those who ministered in poor parishes or undertook social work clearly felt to some extent that their territory was being invaded. There was already, after all, a long and noble tradition of priests in the slums living and sometimes dying with their flocks, through poverty, squalor and the great epidemics. Henry Harrod’s description in the *Dublin* of the process by which respectable society ‘discovered’ the conditions in which the very poor lived and worked, in ‘The Dwellings of the Poor’, gives a flavour of this feeling:

‘We had in April of that year [1883] quoted in these pages the words of Ozanam, “that Christians should interpose between the two camps” (of poverty and wealth), and we had then no anticipation of the excitement into which one of the camps would shortly be thrown by learning the proximity of the other. Later on in the year a journalist made an exploring expedition to the slums, accompanied by an artist, and published the result in a weekly illustrated paper. Then a Nonconformist body, wishing to obtain funds for the erection of mission halls, published a harrowing account of an inspection of some bad courts, which was followed by a paper in a review from the pen of a noble marquis. This fired the train; the excitement at once became intense, and great was the astonishment of Belgravia and Mayfair at the discovery of Whitechapel and Seven Dials. Exploring parties were at once organized, spies sent out, and those who were reputed to know the lie of the enemy’s country, policemen, sanitary inspectors, and priests, were in great request. The reports of special commissioners were read with avidity, committees were formed, the press made coin out of the question ...’⁶¹

⁵⁹ Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (1992), p.23

⁶⁰ ‘*Realities at Home*’, *Month*, April 1902, p.338. C.F.G. Masterman’s *Realities at Home*, an analysis of various responses to the problem of the poor, was published in 1901.

Both Harrod and Britten felt that the most to be hoped from this fad for 'slumming' was that for a very few it might turn to a lasting and active concern for the poor. Wilfrid Meynell, in 'The Story of a Penny Dinner', drew a similar conclusion.⁶²

Philanthropic concern over the condition of the poor was, unquestionably, linked with concern for the survival of the social order. Yet the extent of real fear for the survival of the *status quo* is as difficult to assess for Catholics as for wider society. The short-lived but much publicised riots in London in 1886 and 1887 had achieved for Socialism sudden national publicity, and alarmed those sections of society already made nervous by the extension of the franchise and the introduction of the secret ballot. Occasional riots at times of particular distress had always occurred, especially in London: but now, although membership of Socialist groups was small, and the movement in general still a middle-class one, the ruling-classes feared that the riots were being orchestrated by Socialist leaders working towards the overthrow of the social order. The leading Catholic economist, Charles Stanton Devas, writing on 'The Unemployed' in the *Month* in May 1886, commented that the riots in the West End in the February of that year had brought home to many not only that widespread distress existed from want of employment, but that Socialism in England 'was no longer a harmless idiosyncrasy but a dangerous doctrine, that required in some way or other to be met. And this last fact is the novelty of the situation'.⁶³

Considerable tension surrounded the large and long-drawn out trade disputes such as the Dockers' Strike of Autumn 1889. Yet the majority of workers were not Socialists; they were not even unionised. Where trades unions did exist they still catered largely for the artisan rather than unskilled labouring classes, and were concerned with immediate issues of pay and hours, not with wider ones of a 'class struggle'. Even those Union leaders who took a more radical view were more likely to owe their allegiance to Ruskin or the quasi-socialist land reformer Henry George than to revolutionary Socialists like Marx and Engels: both of whom, together with Morris and the Webbs, realised and lamented the lack of class-consciousness among the English working-classes of this period. In the Catholic journals dark hints as to the possible results if the plight of the poor remained unameliorated tended to appear at the end of articles, as an attempt to stir their audience

⁶¹ 'The Dwellings of the Poor' (hereafter 'Dwellings'), *Dublin*, April 1884, pp.415-416

⁶² 'The Story of a Penny Dinner', *Merry England*, December 1884.

⁶³ 'The Unemployed', *Month*, May 1886, p.1

from their apathy, rather than as their main thrust; rather bearing out Lynd's description of the general middle-class attitude of the 1880s: 'intermittent night terrors' of revolution, underneath which lay a conviction of the essentially law-abiding English character.⁶⁴ As the anonymous writer of the 'Notes on the Press' in the *Month* remarked, despite the recent extension of 'democratic ideas', it would 'probably require an unexampled combination of causes of disturbance to produce any revolutionary outbreak in this country'.⁶⁵ By the 1890s there was growing conviction that England was unlikely to experience the aggressive revolutionary movements seen on the Continent. Far more widespread among Catholic writers was a pessimism about the increasingly irreligious and materialistic nature of society; a dread, not of sudden and violent revolution, but of slow moral disintegration and the slide into materialism and secularism, whether socialistic or otherwise. The spiritual, moral and physical poverty of the modern working-classes was heightened in Catholic eyes (as for all those who dwelt on the merits of the Middle Ages) by its contrast with an idealised picture of the sturdy peasantry of medieval England.

The great influx into England of poor Catholics of Irish birth or descent meant that numerically the Catholics of the 1880s and 1890s were predominantly working-class. The middle- and upper-class groups, formed overwhelmingly of converts or the 'Old Catholic' families, from which the Church drew its priests and the journals their writers and readers, were overwhelmingly English and much smaller in number. The Catholic Emancipation Act had been passed in 1829 and the hierarchy restored in 1850, yet the picture drawn by Best of the English Catholics of the 1870s - 'as enclosed and segregated a denomination as any in Britain' - was slow to change.⁶⁶ The periodicals under discussion give perhaps a somewhat distorted picture of Catholic involvement in politics and public life at this time, preferring, not surprisingly, to emphasise the progress Catholics had made in public life rather than to point to any shortcomings. W.S. Lilly drew a more accurate picture in an article on 'Catholics and County Councils' in the *Dublin Review*, remarking on a general lack of public spirit among Catholics, and the efforts of the Catholic Union (founded in 1871 to promote all Catholic interests, especially the restitution of the sovereign rights to the Papacy) to overcome it.⁶⁷ Where Catholics did involve themselves in politics, they usually confined themselves to those issues which had direct impact on the Catholic

⁶⁴ H. M. Lynd, *England in the Eighteen-Eighties: Toward a Social Basis for Freedom* (1945), p.283.

⁶⁵ *Month*, October 1881, p.277

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875* (1971), p.207

community, and this way of thinking was encouraged by the concentration of their clergy on the resistance to the state drive for secular education. Hickey has pointed to the founding (in 1884) of the voluntary schools association by Bishop Vaughan of Salford as ‘probably the first comprehensive attempt to organise Catholic opinion on a domestic issue in English politics’.⁶⁸ Still more important in Catholic minds, throughout this era and beyond, was Ireland, with the overwhelming majority of English Catholics being wholeheartedly behind the cause of Home Rule, a feeling exploited by the new Irish Nationalist leaders in England. Hickey has shown how Cardinal Manning was obliged to accept, reluctantly, that the Irish question would always come before any other social or political issue for the English Catholics;⁶⁹ and Doyle has demonstrated that in the early 1900s the issue was to complicate and hamper the work of the Catholic Federation.⁷⁰ Gunnin has observed that in the early 1900s when English and Welsh labourers were beginning to transfer their allegiance to the new Labour and ‘Lib-Lab’ parliamentary candidates, the labourers of Irish descent or origin remained loyal to the Liberal party and were encouraged to do so by the Roman Catholic press.⁷¹

The reluctance of the reader of the journals under consideration to read about or be obliged to consider political economy or ‘the problem of the poor’ was implicit throughout this era and often emerges clearly, as in the articles of Devas and of Fr Herbert Lucas.⁷² It was of course by no means confined to Roman Catholics: the more apparent the scale of the problem, the more daunting it seemed to middle-class onlookers. This feeling goes some way to explaining the first of many contradictions within Catholic thought on the social question: the Catholic writers demonstrated reluctance to declare any sense of what might nowadays be called ‘ownership’ of the problem, yet they clearly felt their territory was being invaded. As the majority of the Roman Catholic population in England was Irish-born or of Irish descent and belonged to the working-classes and often to the very poorest section of the working classes, the ‘problem of the poor’ was therefore at its most acute amongst Catholics. Yet there is virtually no mention of this fact in the journals. A rare exception came from the lay social worker Henry D. Harrod, the Honorary Secretary of the

⁶⁷ ‘Catholics and County Councils’, *Dublin Review*, July 1888.

⁶⁸ John Hickey, *Urban Catholics*, (1867), p.147

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.148-149

⁷⁰ Peter Doyle, ‘The Catholic Federation 1906-1929’, in *Studies in Church History*, vol 23, pp.462-469

⁷¹ Gunnin, *op. cit.*, pp.88-90

⁷² The Rev Herbert Walter Lucas SJ contributed to the *Month*, the *Tablet* and the *Dublin*, and to the Catholic Encyclopaedia of 1907-1912.

Catholic Society for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Poor of which Cardinal Manning was Chairman. In his article on 'The Dwellings of the Poor' in the *Month*, Harrod wrote:

'We of all people have a special charge of the poor, firstly and chiefly because of the Divine precept, secondarily, because so many of them are our brethren in the Faith. It is a well-known and indisputable fact that the enormous majority of the poor, even in London, who have any notion of religion at all (because we suppose the largest number of all have none) are Catholics'.⁷³

After this, clear reference to the largely Irish Catholic composition of the poorest classes did not come until the new emphasis on the stereotyping of national characters displayed by Catholic and non-Catholic writers alike towards the end of the century. Then writers on the social question were beginning to comment on the unfitness of the Irish for town life, in the same way in which they spoke of the unsuitability of the English for Socialism, the Dutch capacity for thrift, German for efficiency, and the like.

As details of living conditions among the very poor became better known, a prudish element added to the reluctance to confront the full extent of the social problem; many felt that some facts, however indisputable, were too shocking to be brought to light. This attitude, never entirely shaken off in this period, lay behind Catholic disapproval of Manning's campaigning work with W. T. Stead against child prostitution, and behind the *Tablet's* distaste (displayed, for example, in an article of 22/8/1885) for the new 'naturalism' in fiction and for unvarnished detail in social reporting.⁷⁴ In its review of *Indoor Paupers, by One of Them*, published anonymously in 1885, the *Tablet* described the work as 'a narrative of the acts of the vulgar, of the low-bred, of rascaldom ... of everything nearly that can make one ashamed of belonging to the same species of creature'.⁷⁵ Like wider Victorian society, the middle-class Catholics were horrified and repelled by the vast urban slums, with all the implications they held for the moral and physical conditions of their inhabitants.

In the face of this barrage of unpalatable information, traditional faith in the workings of classical political economy was on the wane. Callaghan has remarked that, 'By the 1890s

⁷³ 'Dwellings', p.346

⁷⁴ *Tablet*, 22/8/1885, pp.284-285

⁷⁵ *Tablet*, 3/4/1886, p.530

there very few defenders of *laissez faire* among the economists'.⁷⁶ Naturally enough, it was slower to die out among the employers. Devas, pointed out in his article on 'The Unemployed' for the *Month* of May 1886, the traditional view of the distress of the working classes was so 'convenient' that it could not be expected to 'become rapidly obsolete ... it flourishes in proud independence of the facts, and is still somewhat current in the market-place; but is no longer upheld among economists, except by a scanty and dwindling handful of doctrinaires'.⁷⁷ It was not that the majority of Catholic writers felt that nothing should be done to ameliorate the plight of the poor: their difficulty lay in deciding how much should be done, and what form such help should take.

The traditional response to poverty was private charity or 'almsgiving', made to individual cases of need, not a demand for action by local or national government or a questioning of the economic *status quo*. This was, if anything, only more true for Catholics. After all, all the Churches traditionally held poverty to be a divine gift: it gave to the poor the opportunity to exercise patience and humility, and to the rich, charity and self-denial. Charity existed, not to eliminate poverty, but to help to balance the scales for those least equipped for what would always be a struggle for existence. Such views were in sharp contrast to the ideas being developed by the contemporary Christian Socialists, who were beginning to look upon the existence of poverty as an evil which could - and should - be remedied.

Excerpts from Bishop Ullathorne's 1886 Advent pastoral, printed in the *Tablet*, summed up the traditional view: 'Many a poor man, and many a poor woman, poor in this world's goods but rich in grace, find peace and content of soul, because they serve God in their poverty, and would lose their souls were they encumbered with this world's goods'.⁷⁸ The Bible told that there would always be poverty, and that the poor would always have to work hard for a bare living. 'The poor always ye have with you' (St John) and 'In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread' (Genesis) were much quoted in articles on the social question. Fr Lucas's remarks in 'National Prosperity and the Ownership of Land' for the *Month* were typical:

⁷⁶ John Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain since 1884*, (1990), p.8

⁷⁷ 'The Unemployed', pp.10-11

⁷⁸ *Tablet*, 27/11/1886, p.871

‘For under all possible circumstances it must always remain true that the great bulk of mankind will eat bread in the sweat of their brow, a fact which modern political economy expresses by saying that population tends to grow up to, and press on, the available means of subsistence ...’ ... ‘We come into a world in which, under whatever economic system, the lot of the greater part of mankind must be to toil for little more than a bare subsistence’.⁷⁹

The *Tablet* agreed: ‘For the majority, daily labour, scant leisure, and a sparing provision of the bare necessities of life are now, as in every previous age of the world, the appointed lot’.⁸⁰ As Gilley has summed up, ‘The Catholic gentleman did not try to cure poverty in the mass, but to relieve it by individual ministration in the realm of his private responsibilities. He gave alms for his own sanctification, for a moral rather than a social end - and in obedience to divine command’.⁸¹ Fr Bernard Vaughan described how, in the 1850s, his elder brother, the future Cardinal, encouraged his young brothers and sisters to visit a Jesuit poor school at Westminster, and how the girls took food and gifts to the local sick and needy, doing so unostentatiously after dark.⁸² Private, personal, ad hoc and discreet ‘almsgiving’ to individual cases of need had for so long been the Catholic idea of charity that it was not surprising that so many Catholics clung to their faith in its rightness and efficacy in the teeth of overwhelming evidence of the vastness and complexity of the modern problem of the poor.

Cardinal Manning, and those social workers and writers - often inspired or influenced by Manning but too small in number and too disparate to be described as a Manningite ‘movement’ - largely failed in their efforts to make their fellow-Catholics perceive the problem of the poor as a burning issue integral to their Faith. Yet their efforts combined with developments abroad and at home - especially, the rise of socialism - provided sufficient pressure to keep the ‘social question’ to the forefront in the press. It was a pressure all the more necessary because Roman Catholics in England did not have their minds forcibly concentrated on the social question by political events. It was very different on the continent where Socialism was an immediate and potent threat, traditionally fiercely anti-clerical in its nature and therefore demanding an immediate and effective response from the Church; as, for example, in Germany where the Catholic Church formed the

⁷⁹ ‘National Prosperity and the Ownership of Land’, *Month*, April 1884, pp.547-552

⁸⁰ *Tablet*, 10/1/1885, p.42

⁸¹ Sheridan Gilley, ‘Heretic London, Holy Poverty and the Irish Poor’, in *Downside Review*, January 1971, vol 89 no. 294, p.67

⁸² O’Neil, *op. cit.*, p.93

Centre Party which fought against anticlerical legislation in the Reichstag. This was a point realised by the *Tablet*, which felt able to greet the calls of Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham for a Catholic party in England with indifference and even some derision, expressing its conviction the ‘profound and settled conviction that a Catholic political party is not so much a mistake as an impossibility, except in those lands and times when the hammer strokes of persecution come to silence questionings’. Significantly, the writer of this leading article felt that the only subject on which the members of such a party would be likely to agree was education.⁸³

In England most Roman Catholic writers had come to realise that the real danger from Socialism lay not in sudden revolution but in a gradual winning of the working-classes to the cause, if no other alternative presented itself to fill the void which seemed to exist between Socialism and the existing order. G.K. Chesterton remarked towards the end of his life that as a young man in the 1890s he had been a Socialist not through any real conviction but because the only alternative seemed to be a blanket acceptance of the *status quo*: ‘I called myself a Socialist: because the only alternative to being a Socialist was not being a Socialist’.⁸⁴ As Devas expressed it in 1886:

‘Now those who have no fixed religious principles, and who are at the same time averse to State Socialism, find themselves in an unsatisfactory position. They could formerly convince or crush all inquirers with an appeal to free contract, free trade, rights of property, and immutable laws of political economy. But these phrases have lost their magic, and those who used them are in sad want of something to take their place’.⁸⁵

How to counter the claims of Socialism without seeming to justify accusations of hidebound reactionism was a problem for all the Churches, but was most acute for the Catholic Church, which had long been associated with conservatism - a charge not helped by Catholic nostalgia for the Middle Ages. The writers themselves did not often acknowledge that the Catholic Church was seen as reactionary. William Samuel Lilly, one of the best-known Catholic writers, was a notable exception. A convert, he was one of the small group of Catholic writers who wrote for the most important secular journals (including the *Nineteenth Century*) as well as the Catholic ones. An Honorary Fellow of

⁸³ ‘Catholic Candidates’, *Tablet*, 1/8/1885, p.161

⁸⁴ G. K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (1959, Grey Arrow Edition), p.101

⁸⁵ ‘How to Help the Unemployed’, *Month*, June 1886, p.167

Peterhouse, a barrister, a JP for London and Middlesex, and for some years Secretary of the Catholic Union of Great Britain, he worked with Devas on a reissue of Byles' *Sophisms of Free Trade* (1903), and later contributed to the Catholic Encyclopaedia of 1907-1912 on 'England since the Reformation'. In his 'Characteristics of Cardinal Manning', he listed the chief hindrances to the spread of Catholicism as the belief of most Englishmen that a Catholic could not be a true Briton and patriot, and that the Church was the enemy of political and social justice, of science, and 'the legitimate progress of the day'.⁸⁶ Another glimpse at the way in which the Church was viewed by the wider public came with the *Tablet's* comments on its publication of the 1885 Papal Encyclical 'On the Christian Constitution of States'. The *Tablet* explained that it had hurried to publish this because:

'Telegraphic summaries had been sent to England not only misleading but gratuitously false. Men's minds were everywhere being unsettled by statements that the Pope had solemnly spoken against popular rule and all democracy, and especially had "condemned household suffrage and the principle of government by majorities"''.⁸⁷

Pressures from within and without the Church combined to necessitate in the 1880s and 1890s the hammering out of some semblance of a English Catholic 'party line' on social issues. In common with the other churches, the Roman Catholic Church found itself obliged both to re-evaluate its own response to poverty, and to assess, commend or condemn the new responses arising all around it. The debate was fully played out in the Catholic periodical press.

⁸⁶ Reviewed in the *Tablet*, 21/3/1885, pp.448-449

⁸⁷ *Tablet*, 21/11/1885, p.805

Chapter 2

Merrie England - the Catholic preoccupation with Guilds, Monasteries and the Medieval 'golden age'

The first and most obvious of the Catholic responses to the ever more detailed picture emerging of poverty in the industrial age was, in effect, a retreat. Comparisons between modern times and the English Catholic idealisation of the medieval 'golden age' of social and economic prosperity were too striking to be resisted. The English Catholics had long felt that - in the words of Lord Acton, the Catholic founder (in 1886) of the *English Historical Review* - in the Middle Ages 'were laid the foundations of all the happiness that has since been enjoyed and all the greatness that has been achieved by men'.⁸⁸ Mgr John Vaughan,⁸⁹ youngest brother of the Cardinal, observed that England owed its Government, its trial by jury, its universities and its cathedrals to Catholic days: while even its prosperity had been greater then, in the sense of being more evenly distributed.⁹⁰ The 1880s and 1890s saw increased attention being paid to the social and economic aspects of the medieval world, as historians, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, examined the evidence on the roles of the trades guilds and, especially, of monastic charity, in the first substantial revision of the traditional view of the Henrician Reformation and its effect - together with that of the suppression of the guilds - on the working-classes.

The modern admirers of the trade guilds argued that they had protected the economic and social position of their members, while the charity of the religious houses provided for those who did chance to fall into extreme poverty through their own improvidence or misfortune. In this - almost entirely rural - idyll of social cohesion, peasant farmers were truly 'freemen' and artisans were 'craftsmen' rather than 'hands' or 'operatives'. Devas felt that the existence of the able-bodied unemployed as a class was entirely a product of modern times. Similarly, Thomas Canning observed that the system whereby middlemen stood between the Dock Companies and their workmen, which he saw as the main cause of the 1889 Dock Strike, was as a typical product of the post-Reformation age.⁹¹ The Catholic

⁸⁸ Quoted in Edward Hutton, 'Catholic English Literature 1850-1950', p. 523, in Beck, *op. cit.*

⁸⁹ Mgr John Stephen Vaughan was born in 1853, educated at Downside, and became a parish priest in London.

⁹⁰ In 'National Decay and "Romanism"', reviewed by the *Dublin*, April 1899, pp.442-444

⁹¹ In 'The Labour Problem: Past and Present', *Dublin*, October 1890 (hereafter, 'Labour Problem'), pp.442-444

writers laid special emphasis on the claim that while English medieval society had been strongly hierarchical, no bitter class divisions existed; rather, everyone had played their part in a true commonwealth. In an article for *Merry England* drawn from his address to the Architectural Association, C. J. Tait remarked: ‘... One beholds the same social unity in the Canterbury Pilgrimage ... The Friar, the Nun, the poor parson, the knight, the shipman, the yeoman riding together merrily and unreservedly’.⁹² The Catholic writers emphasised that while poverty had existed in medieval times - poverty would always exist, and was a Holy state - it had then conveyed dignity, whereas the poor today were degraded and pauperised. Elizabeth Vernon Blackburn observed, in ‘The Peasant’s Place in History’, that ‘Poverty in the peasant before the sixteenth century was an honour, not a disgrace - an honour he shared with the Founder of his faith. But in his descendants poverty was treated as a crime’.⁹³

Moreover, as John George Cox argued in ‘Horny-Handed Brothers: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Labour’, it had been thanks to the example set by the monasteries that dignity had begun to be accorded to manual labour at a time when the military life was still the ideal.⁹⁴ The Catholic writers saw the destruction of the monasteries as the removal of the poor person’s only source of alms, education, and help in time of sickness. Canon Brownlow, writing on ‘The Abolition of Serfdom in England’ for the *Month*, claimed the Dissolution of the Monasteries much exacerbated the problems already brought about by break-up of feudal society and concentration of wealth into fewer hands.⁹⁵ Much stress was still being laid on the roles of the guilds and the monastic charity at the end of this period by, among others, Mgr John Vaughan (in ‘National Decay and “Romanism”’, reviewed in the *Dublin*, April 1899) and by the Right Reverend Terence Benedict Snow, Abbot of Downside. Abbot Snow, who contributed to the *Dublin* and the *Downside*, and wrote and lectured widely on monastic charity,⁹⁶ wrote in 1898: ‘The suppression of the monasteries gave rise to a race of agricultural paupers, the suppression of the guilds generated a race of hungry workmen; the combination of the two resulted in that product of the Reformation, the workhouse’.⁹⁷

⁹² ‘The Evolution and Rhythm of Architecture’, *Merry England*, May 1893, p.40

⁹³ ‘The Peasant’s Place in History’, *Merry England*, March 1885, p.338

⁹⁴ ‘Horny-Handed Brothers: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Labour’, *Merry England*, July 1883.

⁹⁵ ‘The Abolition of Serfdom in England’, *Month*, November 1890, pp.397-398

⁹⁶ The reviews of French Catholic magazines in the *Dublin* were sometimes attributed to ‘TBS’ (Abbot Snow).

⁹⁷ ‘Craft Guilds in the Fifteenth Century’, *Dublin*, April 1898, p.290

Abbot Snow added - in an interesting example of the wider contemporary taste for generalising on national characteristics -

‘Investigation of the influence of the craft guilds makes it tolerably certain that many of the characteristics that distinguish an Englishman, his sturdy independence, his commercial enterprise, his dogged determination, his capacity for government, his self-dependence and love of freedom, took their rise in guild life in mediaeval times’.⁹⁸

Among the group of revisionist historians, led by Professor Thorold Rogers,⁹⁹ the pre-eminent Catholic exponent was Fr Aidan Gasquet, who set out both ‘to rediscover and represent the lost world of the monastic orders’ and to reassess the history of the English monasteries, ‘especially in the crucial years before the Henrician dissolution’.¹⁰⁰ Gasquet had been elected prior of Downside in 1878, and was instrumental in the founding of the *Downside Review*; but he retired from the post due to ill-health in 1885 and turned his attentions to study and especially to the English Middle Ages and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.¹⁰¹ His first and probably best-known book, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries: An attempt to illustrate the History of their Suppression* (two volumes, 1888-89) formed the first detailed rebuttal of the charges against the English religious houses. Reviewing the first volume, in March 1888, the *Month* concluded that the dissolution of the monasteries had been ‘... the most gross theft ever committed by the strong hand of reckless power from the innocent and the helpless, from the Religious and from the poor, whose trustees and guardians they were’.¹⁰² *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* was followed in 1893 by *The Great Pestilence* (on the Black Death of 1348), *The Last Abbot of Glastonbury* (1895), and *Henry VIII and the Church* (1905), all of which were widely and

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 290. Guilds had of course flourished across the continent throughout the Middle Ages and some had survived into the modern era.

⁹⁹ James Edwin Thorold Rogers (1823-1890), an Anglican, spent several years in Holy Orders before retiring to become an academic, and (in the 1880s) an MP. He became the first Tooke professor of statistics and economic science at King’s College London in 1859 and held the post until his death. From 1860 he pioneered exhaustive and extensive research into agricultural conditions in England, publishing *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, from the year after the Oxford Parliament (1259), to the Commencement of the Continental War (1795), compiled entirely from original and contemporaneous records* in seven volumes between 1866-1902.

¹⁰⁰ Aiden Bellenger OSB, ‘Cardinal Gasquet (1846-1929): An English Roman’, in *Recusant History*, October 1999, p. 554.

¹⁰¹ Fr (Francis Neil) Aidan Gasquet OSB was awarded a DD by Leo XIII in 1891, largely in recognition of his work on the history of the Dissolution. He was Abbot-President of the English Benedictines 1900-1900, later became Vatican Librarian in 1917 and Archivist of the Church in 1920, and was created a Cardinal-Priest in 1924.

favourably noticed in the Catholic journals.¹⁰³ Gasquet also found support for the Catholic view of the Middle Ages in the works of William Cobbett, and in 1896 produced a revised and annotated version of Cobbett's *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Wales*.¹⁰⁴ The *Downside Review* of December 1896, also reviewing Fr Gasquet's edition of Cobbett, made the boldest claims for the medieval age as the halcyon period of 'Merrie England':

'... The supposed purification of doctrine and practice created the gulf that has since yearned between the classes and the masses. In the middle ages ... many of the reforms which advanced politicians now desire to introduce in to the village life of modern England, were then in full working order under the kind rule of monastic landlords ... From the point of Christian charity did not the monastic institutions support the poor, give the benefits of education to all, so that the meanest could raise themselves, if they possessed the ability, to the very highest positions?'¹⁰⁵

The author of 'Catholics and Technical Education', commenting on the inception of new technical schools and colleges on the continent, remarked that the necessity for them 'as for so many other forms of social reconstruction' had arisen as a result of the suppression of the monastic orders, 'the founders and fosterers of the culture of industry'.¹⁰⁶

On the subject of the Middle Ages the Catholic writers indulged themselves in a certain amount of rhetoric: Thomas Canning, for example, waxed almost lyrical in the *Dublin*:

'Then the golden sunlight of peace and plenty beamed upon the land, subdued and solemn, even as the sunshine of the visible heaven's radiance itself streamed through the multicoloured panes into those grand old gothic temples reared and cherished by the same hands that founded England's greatness, where every ray that penetrated passed through the memorial of some heroic achievement of saint and martyr in the storied glass. Heart and hand gave, heart and hand alike received, and blessed was he who accepted, more blessed he who bestowed'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² *Month*, March 1888, p.438

¹⁰³ *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* was already in its 3rd edition by July 1888, while Gasquet's new edition of Cobbett's *Reformation* ran to a second edition by March 1897. In 1898 a popular edition (1s) of *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* appeared.

¹⁰⁴ It was also a bowdlerized version, as the *Dublin* reviewer noted: '... vanished [were] the nicknames and somewhat coarse values with which Cobbett, in accordance with the taste of his day, had too plentifully besprinkled his pages'. *Dublin*, January 1897, p.209

¹⁰⁵ Reviews of Books, *Downside Review*, December 1896, pp.308-309

¹⁰⁶ 'Catholics and Technical Education', *Dublin*, October 1890, p.357

¹⁰⁷ 'Labour Problem', p.331

While all the journals laid great stress on the Medieval 'golden age', it is perhaps unsurprising that the most extravagant claims appeared in the *Downside Review*, the voice of a monastic institution. It was left to the convert Cardinal Manning to point out - in an article in the *Dublin* on Gasquet's *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* - that the monasteries had been found in only a third of the country and therefore could not have provided for the majority of the poor. However, he acknowledged, they had been:

'... a thousand centres of constant beneficence; and in the other two-thirds of the land, the palaces of the bishops, the homes of the clergy, the castles of the nobles, and the houses of the faithful, maintained all the year round the Christian law of almsgiving. There was poverty in England, because there were old age and sickness, and the vicissitudes of life and fortune. But there was everywhere the faith which honoured the poor as the brethren of Christ, and the charity which spontaneously ministered to Him in them'.¹⁰⁸

Nostalgia for the Middle Ages was of course a nineteenth century phenomenon not confined to Roman Catholics or to the English; the idea that the medieval age had seen a purer form of worship had, after all, inspired the Gothic revival in Church architecture across Europe. In English political terms it can be traced back to William Cobbett, and to Sir Francis Burdett with his emphasis on Magna Carta and the early constitution for the defence of individual freedom. It permeated the writings of Ruskin (especially *Unto this Last and Fors Clavigera*), while Carlyle in *Past and Present* had compared the England of the 1840s unfavourably with the administration of Bury St Edmunds Abbey in the twelfth century. There was common ground here, too, between the Roman Catholic writers and the leading English Socialists, many of whom, including Hyndman and Morris (and the American quasi-Socialistic land reformer, Henry George) shared to some extent this idealized view of the Middle Ages. While most Socialist leaders did not share the Roman Catholic (and Anglican) enthusiasm for the religious aspects of the craft guilds, they were willing to acknowledge the economic protection they had afforded their members, and also the role of the monastic houses in poor relief. Like the Catholic writers, they too regretted the onslaught of industrialisation and the detachment of the people from the land. The similarity of titles between the Meynells' *Merry England* (begun 1883) and Robert Blatchford's socialistic pamphlet 'Merrie England' (published in 1884) forms just one illustration of this common ground. Blatchford's pamphlet formed a compilation of extracts from his very successful penny paper, the *Clarion*, which was greatly influential in

¹⁰⁸ 'Henry VIII and the English Monasteries', *Dublin*, April 1888, p.250

furthering the spread of Socialistic ideas among the working-classes. (Mayor has remarked, 'The working classes, if they read at all, read the Clarion').¹⁰⁹ Blatchford, much influenced by Carlyle and Ruskin, wanted an end to the factory system, and in his pamphlet 'Socialism: A Reply to the Pope' (1891), written in response to the Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, held that no nation could be truly independent unless its economy was based on agriculture. William Morris drew on an idealised Middle Age for his picture of a rural utopia in *News from Nowhere*. An article by John Leyland in *Merry England*, entitled 'Amateur Art at Home: A Plea for Familiar Beauty' might have been written by Morris: 'There was a time in England when every workman who put his hand to fashion a thing, were he plumber, carpenter, or smith, in any country village, was capable of impressing it with some art quality of its own ...'.¹¹⁰

It was followed a few months later by an article by Morris himself on 'The Medieval and the Modern Craftsman',¹¹¹ which traced the decline in the condition of the working-classes back to the change in the sixteenth century from tillage for food to grazing for profit. The Catholic writers also shared with Socialists including Morris, and indeed, with the advocates in France of Guild Syndicalism, a belief in the great importance of having a 'craft' - rather than being engaged in work so unskilled as to be mere drudgery - to a workman's character. A similar feeling - that the factory system, in mass-producing goods under a monotonous and ugly process, was depriving the workers of their right to draw satisfaction from their work, also inspired the Guild Socialist movement of the early twentieth century. It is indicative of the emphasis laid by the Catholic writers on this point that a reviewer in the *Tablet* of Samuel Smith's article on 'The New Barbarians' in the *Contemporary Review* wrote of 'the millions of corrupt, poor and degraded beings that have grown up in wealthy cities without a home, or a handicraft, or a religion'. The children of such people needed to be taught a handicraft, not 'the heights of the Himalayas and the number of Henry the Eighth's wives ... they will never be rescued until their fingers are honest and rational'.¹¹² There was also common ground, then, between the Catholic writers and those English Socialists most inclined to emphasise the importance to the working-classes of a rural environment and the possession of a 'craft'.

¹⁰⁹ Mayor, *op. cit.*, p.27

¹¹⁰ 'Amateur Art at Home: A Plea for Familiar Beauty', *Merry England*, March 1884, pp.303-304

¹¹¹ 'The Medieval and the Modern Craftsman', *Merry England*, October 1884.

These were powerful allies in spreading the revised view of the Reformation. The writer of an article for *Merry England* on 'Modern Socialists and the Mediaeval Church', quoting from Henry George's *Poverty and Progress* and from Hyndman's *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* in support of the argument that the Reformation had been a direct cause in the increase in misery among the poor, concluded that: '... the Protestant tradition as to the blessings of the glorious and immortal Reformation is fast breaking up. It will soon linger only in Low Church pulpits and Sunday Schools'.¹¹³ This was overly optimistic. As Newsome has observed, the three most widely-read historians of the Victorian age were Macaulay, J.A. Froude and J.R. Green, none of whom condemned the Reformation: indeed, Froude's heroes were the Tudors, 'true benevolent despots'.¹¹⁴ While a handful of writers acknowledged that the traditional view of the Reformation lingered on, most Catholic writers seemed to share with Atteridge the view that their case had been won. While they had mixed feelings about the part Socialistic teaching had played in this - a reviewer in the *Tablet* of the *Month*'s article on 'Modern Socialists and the Medieval Church' remarked, 'Whether it is well that this tradition should be destroyed by such teachers, is, we think, a question; but it is at least a consolation ...'¹¹⁵ - it nevertheless formed a compelling reason for the reluctance felt by many Catholics to dismiss all socialist writings out of hand.

Above all, the Catholics shared with Socialists and others the nostalgia for an idealised rural existence, in all its stark contrast to the urban poverty of the industrialised age. As Cardinal Manning observed in 'How shall Catholics Vote at the Coming Election?', written during the approach of the first General Election since the extension of the franchise,

'... the happiest and most thriving condition of a people is when to every cottage in the villages and hamlets of the land there is attached so much land for garden and cultivation as a man can dig and sow and prune and keep in order in the hours when his day's work is done. Such a holding, with his week's wages, enables him to live and to rear his family, and, as we know by large experience, even to rise from a labourer to an employer of labour, and from a working-man to a farmer'.¹¹⁶

¹¹² *Tablet*, 7/3/1885, p.363.

¹¹³ 'Modern Socialists and the Mediaeval Church', *Month*, April 1886, p.464. Both the article and the 1909 Index to the *Month* have 'A.H.A'. This was almost certainly A. Hilliard Atteridge SJ, who was assistant editor of the *Month* for one year, a former editor of the *Catholic Times*, and a contributor to various other Catholic papers and reviews in England and the USA.

¹¹⁴ David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture* (1997), p.161.

¹¹⁵ *Tablet*, 10/4/1886, p.570

¹¹⁶ 'How shall Catholics Vote at the Coming Election?', *Dublin*, July 1885, p.410

On this subject Cardinal Manning - like Devas, heavily influenced here by the work of the French economist Frederick Le Play - was completely in line with the general Catholic view. Significantly, many of Fr Maher's objections to the urban, socialistic utopia envisaged by Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward*¹¹⁷ echoed those of William Morris, who had written his rural utopia *News from Nowhere* in direct response to *Looking Backward*. The best-selling novel *No 5, John Street*, by the socialistic Richard Whiteing (published in 1899), was also permeated by a longing for a rural existence, and not only for the very poor: 'Maurice sweats over parchments in the Temple, as the bondslave of a house in Brynaston Square, when his true gift is the ingle corner of a cottage and the labour of the field'.¹¹⁸ Despite its contemporary subject matter, *No 5, John Street* belongs to a long line of English novels in which a peaceful and rational rural existence is disturbed by corrupt and decadent influences from the city. In this aspect at least the novel was in tune with contemporary feeling among Catholic writers. The wider desire for a return to the land for the masses led to the 'Three acres and a Cow' movement led by Jesse Collings, many of whose aims became embodied in the Small Holdings Act of 1892. This drew support from across the political spectrum and is nowadays usually perceived as an individualistic rather than a socialist measure. Yet it was connected in many contemporary minds with Socialism, not least because it was supported by Joseph Chamberlain. A reviewer in the *Tablet* on the subject remarked:

'To increase the number of those directly interested in the soil is an object of desire equally to the landless agitator and to the lord of many acres; to the Radical who regards the "land question" only as a lever with which to work upon the cupidity of the masses, and to the territorial magnate who regards the establishment of peasant proprietors or independent yeoman merely as the swearing in of so many extra special constables bound by self-interest to protect the sacred rights of property'.¹¹⁹

Here, as in several areas in which they found themselves in agreement with Socialists or other dubious company, the Catholics sought to distinguish their support from that of the others. Others might argue for the return of the trade guilds or the restoration of the peasantry to the land: only Catholics could be trusted to do so for the right reasons. Indeed, the feeling that only Catholics could fully appreciate the nature of society in the

¹¹⁷ 'A Socialist's Dream', *Month*, pt.1 January 1891 and pt.2 February 1891.

¹¹⁸ Richard Whiteing, *No 5, John Street*, (1899) p.26

¹¹⁹ *Tablet*, 24/10/1885, p.642

Middle Ages permeated the journals and was expressed explicitly by an anonymous *Dublin* reviewer: 'It may be fairly said that none but a Catholic can thoroughly understand the Middle Ages, when the Catholic Church was intimately connected with, and put its impress on, every institution of public and private life'.¹²⁰ It was a lost *Catholic* golden age. For the Catholics, those outsiders who expounded on the delights of the English Middle Ages were misguided in that they tended to view the religious aspects of, for example, the trade guilds, as an 'optional extra' whereas for Catholic writers the common religion was the root cause of the social cohesion and the charitable feeling. How could any product of late nineteenth-century England - urban, Protestant and increasingly secular - possibly understand? Here again too, as in the comments on the fashion for 'slumming', there was evidence of a vague but unmistakable sense of resentment, as though long-held preserves were being encroached upon. The concept of a lost Catholic 'Merrie England' also left room for assaults on Protestantism in general, as the creator of unbridled and rapacious capitalism. (As Gilley has remarked, the existence of urban poverty in overwhelmingly Catholic cities like Paris and Palermo was 'a definite embarrassment' to the Catholic social apologist: certainly, the journals of this period did not address this issue).¹²¹ Dr William Barry made such an attack in his essay on 'The Church and the Social Revolution', printed in the *Dublin*. This is quoted at some length as being at once illustrative of the habitual strength and bluntness of Dr Barry's language and yet perhaps the only part of a controversial essay with which Catholic writers might have been in unanimous agreement:

'The Reformed religion, unpeopling heaven of its saints and angels, breaking the communion with the Unseen, and substituting ... only the material world as a solid, palpable reality ... love for the brethren was founded on the law of supply and demand, corrected by the poor-rate, and by philanthropy 'increasing as the square of the distance'; while poverty, no longer a counsel of perfection, appeared, as in the days of Juvenal, to be ridiculous. Such, by development and success in trading, did the Protestant Gospel become in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ... "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another," said the dying Christ. "I read not so", the commercial Christian nourished on Puritanism replied, "not so, but that ye overreach one another" ... it is not Christ who sits in the market-place to rule the exchanges, or in the manufactory to judge between master and man, but the "lawless one" set free at the Reformation to grind the faces of the poor, who, while he relegated the Eight Beatitudes within the covers of a book that no one heeded, or while he set up a dreary Sabbatarian covenant for one day in the week, was careful to take to himself the other six. Instead of the "vinculum

¹²⁰ In a brief review of Johannes Janssen's *The History of the German People from the end of the Middle Ages* (1880), *Dublin Review*, July 1880, p.229

¹²¹ Gilley, ('Heretic London ...'), *op. cit*, p.69

charitatis” among Christians, was recognised only the cash-nexus. They were to be brethren and dearly-beloved in the circle of the pulpit; but in mart and workshop they became deadly enemies, whose exact and unalterable relation Mr Darwin was at last enabled to formulate as a struggle for existence, in which the weakest went to the wall ...’.¹²²

The Medieval guilds furnished the Catholic writers with their ideal form of socio-economic activity. Guilds not only enabled the working-classes to defend their economic position, but bound society together, rather than dividing it on class grounds; above all, they were led and directly informed by the Catholic religion, relieving them of any taint of revolutionism or socialism. They were the antithesis of modern, godless philanthropy, which seemed to emphasise the divisions between rich and poor. Fr Gasquet, writing on the Medieval guilds for the *Downside*, commented:

‘... the word “religious” had a wider, and if I may be allowed to say so, I think, a truer signification than has obtained in later times. Religion was understood to include the exercise of the two commandments of charity - the love of God, and the love of one’s neighbour - and the exercises of practical charity to which Guild brethren were bound by the Guild statutes were considered as much religious practices as the attendance at church ...’.¹²³

Fr Gasquet went on to argue that with the destruction of the monasteries the old, Christian ideal of stewardship of property had given way to a sense of absolute ownership: ‘In a word the Reformation substituted the idea of Individualism as the basis of property for the idea of Christian collectivism’. Here he was in full agreement with the most influential Catholic political economist, C.S. Devas, who held this view as one of his central tenets.

In a long and admiring review in the *Dublin* of July 1892 of *Two Thousand Years of Guild Life*, by the Rev. Lambert, ‘JM’ (Fr Moyes, the Editor) emphasised that authorities agreed in regarding the Guild ‘as the creation of the hereditary law of transmitted aptitudes by which families tended to pursue the same calling, and to unite together for its furtherance and defence’.¹²⁴ There could hardly be more stark a contrast with modern urban life, where mothers and children were in competition with fathers. The author of ‘Catholics and Technical Education’ remarked of the medieval system of apprenticeship that: ‘Taken

¹²² ‘The Church and the Social Revolution’, pp.281-282

¹²³ ‘Some Aspects of Medieval Guild Life’, *Downside Review*, July 1898, (hereafter ‘Guild Life’), p.88

¹²⁴ Notices of Books, *Dublin*, July 1892, p.233

altogether, with its homely influences and transmission of traditional method, it came nearer to the ideal of industrial training than anything that seems likely to take its place'.¹²⁵

In an essay on 'Beccles Corpus Christi Gild', Hugh Edmund Ford¹²⁶ emphasised that in addition to their own particular special purpose, the guilds served as mutual benefit societies, burial clubs, centres of social conviviality, and not infrequently, boards of arbitration. As the charitable aspects were largely carried out by the guild members, rather than by the priest or a few wealthy parishioners as would more normally be the case, the danger of attracting 'bread and butter Catholics' was reduced. Moreover, Prior Ford claimed, the work of the guild brought the various classes of people in a locality into close fellowship, not only in the church 'but in their daily work, in the pleasures and misfortunes of life, and around the festive board'. In this, as well as their religious function, lay the complete superiority of guilds to 'modern pious associations', and still more to the public institutions which now attempted to do the good works formerly done by the guilds: 'The one system requires and develops the Christian life, the other is little more than utilitarian philanthropy'.¹²⁷ While there had sometimes been too much drinking and some disorderly behaviour:

'.... if the mass of the people are to be made Christian, the educated and refined men and women must in some way be brought into contact with their rougher fellows, and they must take men as they are, and women too, for the "sisters" also were present at these merry-making ... We, being "wise", must "gladly suffer the foolish"''.¹²⁸

While the Anglican Christian Socialists also looked to the medieval guilds for inspiration, they shared neither the Catholic depth of concentration on this one facet of the social question nor the same apparent trust in a successful revival of the trades guilds in their old form. Indeed, it is difficult to make a confident assessment of the extent to which the Catholic writers really believed the clock could be turned back and the supposed social attitudes of a bygone age successfully reintroduced. The Beccles Corpus Christi Guild, reformed in June 1892, was seized upon as an example of what might be done, but was one of very few attempts in England to revive the old-style guilds. It is impossible not to

¹²⁵ 'Catholics and Technical Education', *Dublin*, October 1890, p.346

¹²⁶ Prior Ford of Downside.

¹²⁷ 'Beccles Corpus Christi Gild', *Downside Review*, July 1895, p.232

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.234

wonder if Prior Ford, for example, really envisaged a group of late Victorian ladies and gentlemen sitting down to an evening's conviviality with the workers, even those respectable 'artisans' or 'craftsmen' who formed the writers' ideal of working-class men. If however there was some naivety on this point, it was one not confined to Catholics. The binding together of the classes in good fellowship was the aspect of medieval life on which the admirers of Disraeli focused when they founded the Tory 'Primrose League' in the wake of the extension of the franchise in 1885. The stated object of the League was 'the Maintenance of Religion, the Estates of the Realm, and the Integrity of the Empire' and it attempted, by providing a programme of political education leavened with some amusements, to bring rich and poor together on a common platform. (It is clear from the pages of the *Tablet* that there was some interest among Catholics in joining the League, and the argument over whether or not they might do so rumbled on for several years, with much of the debate centring around Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham, who was strongly against Catholic membership).¹²⁹ It was true that the Pope himself expressed in his address to the French 'Pilgrims of Labour' in 1889 and in the 1891 Encyclical *Rerum novarum* his wish to see the medieval trade guilds revived, but he seems to have been looking, not to England, but to the chance of 'Christianizing' the new trades associations which were springing up in Germany and which might serve as defences against the rise of state socialism. However, many English Catholic writers did undoubtedly see the guilds as institutions which could be directly imitated in the modern day; and almost all saw them as, at the very least, the best example of the *attitudes* the lower and lower classes should hold towards each other. Fr Gasquet saw the medieval guilds as worth further study not least 'in view of some of the Socialistic difficulties already demanding solution, and the many more still looming in the distance' but qualified this by concluding that they would be: '... altogether impossible and out of place in this modern world of ours. They would not, and could not, meet the wants and needs of these days; and yet they are quite worth studying and thinking about, for they are suggestive and helpful ...'.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ 'If the masses join with the classes, where will Mr Gladstone find his supporters? Not amongst the honest working men of the country, but in the ranks of the Socialist, Republican, and rebel, who are so anxious to destroy the garden of England', as F. Booth Barry KCPL remarked in his *The Primrose League: Its Aims, Object and Work* (2nd edition, 1889, pp.3-4). Booth Barry claimed that the 'maintenance of religion' referred to the defence of Christianity against atheism and infidelity, and thus was no bar to Roman Catholic or Nonconformist membership. Those opposing Bishop Bagshawe included the Duke of Norfolk and the League's Catholic vice-chairman, George Lane-Fox. However, most Catholics would have been repelled by the League's implacable opposition to Home Rule.

¹³⁰ 'Guild Life', pp. 85-105

Yet Prior Ford of Downside, reading his paper on ‘Some old ways of doing Charity’ to the Catholic Conference of 1895, was reported by the *Month* as having not only ‘charmed his hearers by the antiquarian interest of his paper’, but ‘afforded a practical demonstration of the ability of the Church of Christ to solve those problems, the difficulties of which do but grow more acute under the treatment of mere human wisdom’.¹³¹ While the *Tablet*, in a review of M. Sabatier’s *L’église et le travail manuel* (1895), agreed that: ‘Among the remedies suggested for contemporary hardships we find some that are by no means impracticable; for instance, a revival of the trade guilds of the Middle Ages...’.¹³² In contrast, Professor Mivart remarked, with characteristic bluntness, that even supposing that the English society in the Middle Ages had been as admirable as its enthusiasts claimed,

‘...was it a condition of things which can be approximated to by any direct system of approach? No one in England, out of Bedlam, can be so mad as to dream of bringing back the social conditions of that or any other bygone time. The “principles” and “ideals” which underlay those conditions may be advocated and propagated, but really successful reaction is a thing essentially impossible ...’.¹³³

If the possibility of successful revival of the guilds was - occasionally - doubted, the belief that the classes could, and should, be reunited in good fellowship was never called into question. The Catholic Social Union was founded in 1894 with the aim of ‘uniting all classes on the Christian basis of religious, social, and human interests’.¹³⁴ Nor was the axiomatic belief that ‘rural’ poverty was infinitely preferable to ‘urban’ ever challenged. As Devas explained, in ‘What to do with the Landowners’, country life was better not only for the body, but for the mind. In the country people lived under the scrutiny of their neighbours, and their children under that of their parents, while rural life was less fraught with excitements and temptations than was city life.¹³⁵ These ‘excitements’ were, in fact - as Canon Samuel Barnett summed up in the *Nineteenth Century* - one of the chief attractions for the poor of urban life; together with more opportunities for chance work, and for company.¹³⁶ Not least controversial of the remarks made by Dr Barry in his speech on

¹³¹ ‘The Catholic Conference of 1895’, by the Editor (John Gerard SJ), *Month*, October 1895, p.179

¹³² Reviewed in the *Tablet* of 7/9/1895, p.377

¹³³ ‘On Catholic Politics’, *Dublin*, July 1883, p.12

¹³⁴ The aims of the CSU were stated in a circular distributed by the Society’s Hon. Secretary, Austin Oates at the Catholic Conference of 1894 (where he also addressed the Conference) and reported by James Britten in the ‘The Catholic Conference of 1894’, in the *Month*, October 1894, pp.272-273

¹³⁵ ‘What to do with the Landowners’, *Dublin*, October 1886, pp.243-250 (hereafter ‘Landowners’).

¹³⁶ Samuel A. Barnett, ‘Distress in East London’, in the *Nineteenth Century*, November 1886, in *Nineteenth Century Opinion: An Anthology of extracts from the first fifty volumes of The Nineteenth Century, 1877-1901*, ed. Michael Goodwin (1951), p.65. The Anglican Reverend Barnett, a Canon of

the Church and the Working-classes for the 1890 Catholic Conference was his comment that the villages were losing their young labourers to the towns where 'they find work plentiful and life not so deadly dull as in the country'.¹³⁷ This comment was unusual among the Catholic periodicals of its time, and it reflected the fact that few Catholic writers on the social question had Canon Barnett's experience of watching cherished theories put into practice. It is significant that an exception - Fr Nugent of Liverpool, tireless social worker and 'Apostle of Temperance' - commenting ruefully on the failure of agricultural reformatories, remarked, 'How few townsmen ever, through choice or necessity, betake themselves to agricultural labour!'¹³⁸ Devas, in 'What to do with the Landowners' for the *Month*, did touch on the unfittedness of the contemporary urban poor for life in the country, but defended his own position by arguing that he was speaking of future generations whom he felt should, in the majority, be country-bred.¹³⁹

In 'The Invasion of England', W. F. Butler claimed that 'a great physical and moral degeneration' had resulted from the shift of the masses from the countryside to the towns: 'The laws of nature were reversed. It was no longer the survival of the fittest. It was the survival of the fattest'.¹⁴⁰ The Catholic writers saw the rural poor as protected from the extremes of industrial capitalism seen in the town. W. F. Butler pointed out that the poorest urban dwellers were 'removed from starvation by the duration of one day's health' whereas country dwellers could supplement their wages by other means.¹⁴¹ Devas, Butler and the other writers who dwelt on this and other advantages of rural life closely echoed the remarks on pig-rearing and straw-plaiting William Cobbett had made when he had mourned changing rural conditions in his *Rural Rides* sixty years earlier. Devas, drawing heavily on Le Play, argued the case for rural and semi-rural factories, surrounded by a domain which afforded a home and a half-acre of land for each worker. He wrote of bringing mothers out of factories and workshops and urban lodgings into homes with pigs

Bristol from 1893 and London from 1906, was one of the best-known Christian Socialists. He was the co-founder (in 1884), and warden, of Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel. He published *Practicable Socialism*, conjointly with Henrietta Barnett, his wife, in 1893.

¹³⁷ *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, p.68

¹³⁸ Canon Barrett, *Father Nugent of Liverpool* (1949), p.53.

¹³⁹ 'Landowners', pp.243-254

¹⁴⁰ 'The Invasion of England', *Merry England*, November 1888, p.49. This was Sir William Butler, Alice Meynell's brother-in-law and a co-founder of *Merry England*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.49

and poultry, goats and bees, cabbages and potatoes, washing and brewing, an 'abundance of enjoyment for herself and her children'.¹⁴²

Above all, the Catholic writers clung throughout this period to a conviction of the superior moral atmosphere of the countryside. A worker for the Catholic Social Union remarked wistfully that 'occasional glimpses of simple country life have a strangely purifying action on the feverish bodies and brains of our city-bred boys and girls ...'.¹⁴³ The same feeling that a rural existence was better for mind and body animated the drive for child emigration to Canada, as McClelland has shown.¹⁴⁴ Behind the idealisation of rural poverty was the view, firmly held but rarely expressed explicitly until the end of this era, that those of Irish birth or descent were peculiarly unsuited to the urban environment. In 'Catholic Progress in England' James Britten observed that it should be borne in mind that 'our poorer people are exposed from their environment to peculiar temptations': they were subject to the disastrous 'and natural' results of overcrowding, of multiple temptations to drink, and to moral danger of all kinds. As many of the Catholic poor were of Irish descent, they were 'fitted neither by hereditary nor tradition for the slum life of large towns, where public opinion, which in their own land was in favour of religion and its observances, sets in an adverse direction'.¹⁴⁵

Devas had comparatively little to say on the 'golden age' of medieval England, although he was one of the chief exponents of the idealisation of rural poverty: that it would be immeasurably better for the poor and for society in general if the majority were to live and work in the country was to him self-evident - 'religion and patriotism are agreed on this point'.¹⁴⁶ To his mind the real deterioration in the conditions of the working-classes came with the decline of the apprenticeship system and the growth of industrialisation, with its corresponding increase in the impersonal nature of the relationship between master and man, and a new, cut-throat approach to the work-place. In 'Fair Wages' he argued that while there had always been disputes between workmen and their masters,

¹⁴² 'Is England on the Road to Ruin?', *Month*, May 1887, p.15

¹⁴³ *Tablet*, 23/2/1895, p.287.

¹⁴⁴ V. Alan McClelland, 'Child Emigration to Canada in Late Victorian and Edwardian England: A Denominational Case Study', in V. A. McClelland (ed.) *Children at Risk (Aspects of Education*, no. 50, 1994, University of Hull) pp.36-53

¹⁴⁵ 'Catholic Progress in England', *Month*, 2 parts, July and August 1899, pt 1, p.77

¹⁴⁶ 'Landowners', p.255

‘What is new is the state of normal and habitual antagonism, each side trying to get the better of the other, and recognizing no standard of fairness and justice. This is the intolerable novelty, which for most industries of England, is not yet a hundred years old, and is much more recent in the United States and the Continent. This is the novelty, which, unless we can make an end of it in a Christian renovation of society, will lead us into a dismal path of anarchy and bloodshed’.¹⁴⁷

Devas even looked to the works of Shakespeare for support for the old apprenticeship system and for guilds, arguing that their author would have deprecated the economic anarchy of England in modern times.¹⁴⁸

Of all the Catholic writers, Devas had the highest hopes for a reinvigorated rural working-class or, in the increasingly outmoded term to which he adhered, ‘peasantry’. He felt that rural workers were physically, morally - and therefore, even politically - more robust than their urban counterparts; they were the best hope, perhaps the only hope, of halting their country’s slow slide into degeneracy. This feeling is best illustrated in his review of *Le Socialisme aux Etats-Unis* for the *Dublin*, in which he commented that while it was not easy to estimate how far the largest of the American trades unions had been ‘infected’ with Socialism, the rural workers simply made the claim of:

‘... honest Christian yeoman for protection against abominable monopolies and usurious exactions ... they are in no danger, as the trades-unions are, of being absorbed by the maelstrom of Socialism. Indeed, the “farmers” (who correspond to the German Bauern, or ancient English yeomanry) are the very bulwark of American social life against the invading forces of corruption; and they and the Catholic Church form the two centres of hope for the future of the Republic’.¹⁴⁹

‘Rural poverty good, urban poverty bad’ would scarcely be too simplistic a summary of the general view among Catholic writers, and it was a view they clung to during the 1890s, when wider intellectual society was beginning to turn to the more positive aspects of urban life. Idealisation of pre-industrial and rural life was so dear to the hearts of Catholic writers that it endured long into the twentieth century. Both G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc argued for a ‘Distributive’ movement which, by dividing property among the population in a more equitable way, would create a mass of contented ‘peasant proprietors’. *Rerum novarum*, it will be seen, was attacked by Socialists for leaning too heavily on the peasant-

¹⁴⁷ ‘Fair Wages’ *Month*, August 1886, p.501

¹⁴⁸ ‘Shakespeare and the Economists’, *Dublin*, January 1887.

proprietor model of ownership. Doyle has also pointed to the over-reliance on rural examples of successful social experiments - savings banks, co-operative creameries, and so on - which characterised Charles Plater's influential *The Priest and Social Action* (1914).¹⁵⁰ The first two Archbishops of Westminster in the new century, Cardinals Bourne and Hinsley, both looked to the Middle Ages as a model for a more just society.

While the Catholic writers were in agreement on the 'principles and ideals' underlying their idealised medieval, rural society, how these were to be brought to bear on the contemporary world remained the fundamental unanswered question of their era. Indeed, the concentration on the lost 'golden age' encouraged a tendency among English Catholics to look back and lament rather than to grapple with the problems of an urbanised and industrialised world. It to some extent legitimised Catholic inertia on those wider aspects of the social question beyond the provision of Catholic schools, asylums, and orphanages. This was surely the attitude Cardinal Manning was confronting when he wrote:

'What (in the face of the new age) is our duty? - not to lament the past, nor to dream of the future, but to accept the present. Dreams and lamentations weaken the sinews of action; and it is by action alone that the state of the world can be maintained'.¹⁵¹

Wilfrid Meynell, despite his 'Young England' ideals, was also aware of the perils of nostalgia, commenting in his magazine's first issue that:

'Professor Ruskin does not love the steam plough, yet surely the steam plough in the midst of scenery the most idyllic is a better alternative - where such alternative must be - than a starving people ... Frankly accepting the conditions of Modern England, we would have it a Merry England too'.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Dublin*, April 1898, pp.446-447. Review of *Le Socialisme aux Etats-Unis* by the Rev. W J Kerby, 1898.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Doyle, 'Charles Plater SJ and the Origins of the Catholic Social Guild' in *Recusant History*, vol. 21 no.3, May 1993, p.409

¹⁵¹ Quoted in a review of *Characteristics from the Writings of Cardinal Manning*, arranged by W. S. Lilly, in the *Tablet*, 21/3/1885, p.448

¹⁵² *Merry England*, May 1883, editorial.

Chapter 3

Devas, *Groundwork*, and Democracy: the impact of C. S. Devas, the leading Roman Catholic political economist

At the start of the 1880s the Catholic writers had a stock response to which they clung in the face of the ever more pressing 'problem of the poor': that as society could only be 'renovated' by Christianity, only a national return to the Faith could provide a real and lasting solution. That the Church throughout the ages had been the most powerful force for good was axiomatic. As a reviewer of Devas' *Studies of Family Life - A Contribution to Social Science* remarked, 'All history bears witness to the fact that the human race progresses, with true progression only through the teaching and practice of Christian truths'.¹⁵³ Many, like George Tyrrell in the *Month*, observed that the end of slavery could only have been brought about by Christianity.¹⁵⁴ In a series of lectures, published as 'Lectures on Slavery and Serfdom in Europe' and reviewed by the *Dublin* of October 1892, the Rev W R Brownlow, Canon of Plymouth, suggested that just as slavery had been slowly but surely abolished in every place where Christianity prevailed, the 'same beneficent influence will end by abolishing this great social curse everywhere, and will deal in the same way with the social problems which now trouble us'.¹⁵⁵

Devas remarked that on the great social question, only the Church could be truly impartial. 'Who but ourselves can be trusted not to sink into being the unconscious or hireling mouthpieces of a selfish plutocracy or a greedy proletariat? Who else have a living voice that can call them back if they go astray?'.¹⁵⁶ Socialism was evil, not only in itself, but because it promised what it could not possibly deliver. In this context, it can be seen how isolated Cardinal Manning was in his rueful acknowledgement that 'all the great works of Charity in England have had their beginning out of the Church'.¹⁵⁷ and how such a remark would have been received among Catholics. This stock response remained but it was augmented by other axioms which emerged in the 1880s, to meet the problem of the poor - and the most pressing challenge of the moment, the popularity of the quasi-socialistic

¹⁵³ *Tablet*, 1/5/1886, p.689

¹⁵⁴ 'The New Sociology', *Month*, August 1895.

¹⁵⁵ 'Notices of Books', *Dublin*, October 1892, p.475

¹⁵⁶ 'An Olive Branch on State Socialism', *Dublin*, April 1888 (hereafter, 'Olive Branch') p.335

¹⁵⁷ In *Miscellanies* by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, (3 vols, 1877-88), quoted in McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence*, pp.20-21.

policies advocated by the American Henry George in his highly successful *Poverty and Progress*, published in 1879.¹⁵⁸ This, like George's next work, *Social Progress*,¹⁵⁹ was condemned by the *Tablet* as an outrageous attack on the fundamental and axiomatic right to private property. There is no doubt as to George's general impact in the early 1880s: his works were widely disseminated among working men and influenced Christian Socialist leaders, especially Headlam. George's brand of semi-socialism succeeded Frederic Harrison's Positivism as, in Catholic eyes, the leading enemy of the Faith. In 1888, *Poverty and Progress* came close to being placed on the Index, an outcome only averted by a campaign vigorously supported by Cardinals Manning and Gibbons. Manning, at the suggestion of Wilfrid Meynell, had in 1885 met Henry George, and had received George's assurance that he accepted that the right to own property was part of the Divine Order, and that his quarrel was with the widespread abuse of this right.

Although it would be impossible to assess accurately the lasting impact of Henry George in 'politicising' working-class attitudes, the Georgist movement in England was comparatively short-lived. Yet in the 1880s the Georgist threat had to be taken seriously and in combating George's theories of land reform, the Catholic writers rehearsed many of the arguments which as the decade progressed were to be used against fully-fledged Socialism and advancing democracy. The *Tablet*, in its review of *Social Progress*, remarked of George that it 'ought to be superfluous to combat his gigantic nonsense', because he sought to reverse 'the experience and legislation of thousands of years', and to substitute 'boundless revolution for the prudent and progressive improvement of laws and customs that are good on the whole, though liable to some local and temporary abuse'.¹⁶⁰ Here, in a nutshell, was one prevailing attitude of the journals of the 1880s. They shared with wider Victorian society a vague belief that - notwithstanding periodic 'bad times' - the general condition of the working-classes was gradually changing for the better (a belief which, in the Catholic journals, often sat a little oddly along side the view that a Protestant and increasingly secular society could only be going from bad to worse). It also reflected their fundamental conservatism, in speaking of the basically sound, and even improving, state of society: 'abuses' were caused by individual sin and misdoing, not the result of an entire socio-economic order pitched against a certain class.

¹⁵⁸ First published in America in 1880, this was published in England in 1881, quickly followed by a cheap (6d) edition in 1882.

¹⁵⁹ Published in England in 1884.

The Catholic writers concentrated on the reiteration of two points: that both the private ownership of property, and the existence of a social hierarchy, were part of the Divine Order. On these two points, whatever their later disputes, the writers were always agreed. In both cases they looked for arguments to the teaching of the elders of the Church, especially St Thomas Aquinas. There was other support too: In 'The Land Question', William Hayden SJ traced private ownership back to the fourth chapter of Genesis, citing 'Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat' as proof that private ownership of chattels was by then recognised.¹⁶¹ In a leader of June 1884 on the recent pro-democratic demonstrations, the *Tablet* argued that as civil society was essentially hierarchical, the only real choice was between the aristocracy of rank and wealth open to all, 'such as we have here in England', and the 'hierarchy of officials, the most odious of privileged orders' currently endured by the French.¹⁶² In 'Social Disturbances - their Cause and Cure' for the *Dublin*, Fr John S. Vaughan set out at some length the 'standard' Catholic view on the social hierarchy. Fr Vaughan observed that inequality was everywhere, no two people being equally gifted with beauty, health, talent, and brains, while '... In the kingdom of God itself there is a hierarchy'. That the law of inequality should affect the distribution of wealth was equally natural and inevitable. Indeed, to suppose that it were possible to make an equal distribution of wealth, or at least to suppose that such an equal distribution could be maintained, while inequality in everything else continued, was 'so obviously absurd that time would be ill spent in attempting to disprove it'. Some of the examples chosen to illustrate the inevitability of inequality were ill-judged. Fr Vaughan, for example, also remarked on the endless variations of the human face and form which ran 'from the professional beauties whose portraits smile out upon the passer-by from the shop windows ... down to the poor deformed and decrepit creatures of the blind-alley or the gin shop', while failing to reflect on the impact which poor nutrition, environment and overwork might take on appearance and physique.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Tablet*, 9/2/1884, pp.209-210

¹⁶¹ 'The Land Question', *Month*, September 1887, p.83

¹⁶² *Tablet*, 16/8/1884, p.243

¹⁶³ 'Social Disturbances - their Cause and Cure', *Dublin*, January 1886, p.336

Professor St George Mivart, the Catholic biologist whose *Genesis of Species* (published in 1871) had sought to reconcile Darwinism with Catholicism, looked to evolution for scientific support for the social hierarchy.¹⁶⁴

‘The differences which are due to wealth are great, and those which are due to culture are greater; but if there is one thing which modern science makes clear, it is the profound influence of “heredity” ... Let us look facts in the face, and not be children crying for the moon! ... so profound is the difference between men of the same community, that even if they could be reduced to equality now, that equality could not be maintained without the aid of the most tyrannically restrictive measures’.¹⁶⁵

Modern attacks on all right to own property were seen as an unique outrage. The *Dublin*, reviewing W.H. Mallock’s *Social Equality: a Short Study in a Missing Science*¹⁶⁶ in April 1882, remarked that even ‘amidst the wildest excesses of the first French Revolution’ the power, rather than the riches, of the aristocracy had been attacked, and property was declared ‘to be for ever sacred’.¹⁶⁷ The Catholic defence of private property was maintained throughout this period, although in the 1890s the writers had more to say on the subject of oppressive landlords. An article by ‘JCH’ in the *Dublin*, entitled ‘Mr Henry George and the Land’ usefully summarised the Catholic position on the importance of social stability and the maintenance of the existing social order. Written in the form of a letter to a young theologian who had enquired ‘with some anxiety whether the teaching of Mr George, that “private property is unjust” can be held consistently with Catholic teaching and with sound morality’, the writer stated that they could not, and warned against such ‘heresy’:

‘... If there is a truth that is certain, among all the theories and assertions which one hears, it is that there ought to be stability in social order’... ‘We must not have priests becoming socialists. We must not have the salt of the earth losing its savour. Human nature is prone enough to confuse right and wrong in its passion

¹⁶⁴ Professor St George Mivart had converted in early life to Roman Catholicism. His work appeared in many prestigious journals, including the *Nineteenth Century*. *Genesis of Species* earned him the gratitude and admiration of many Catholics. However in later years he gradually moved so far from orthodoxy as to be excommunicated.

¹⁶⁵ ‘On Catholic Politics’, p.2

¹⁶⁶ W. H. Mallock was a supporter of the Liberty and Property Defence League, a group of major employers who opposed socialism and what they perceived as ‘grandmotherly’ legislation. In 1884 he published *Property and Progress*, in response to Henry George. He was a frequent contributor to the prestigious *Nineteenth Century*. Mallock’s defence of classical economics shared some of the arguments about ‘human nature’ employed by the Catholics writers in their attacks on Socialism.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Notices of Books’, *Dublin*, April 1882, p.494

and pride, without its guides and its fathers disastrously increasing that confusion by unsound principles'.¹⁶⁸

(ii)

These axioms, however dearly-held and constantly reiterated, would not have been enough by themselves to support the writers through the debate of the 1880s on the problem of the poor. Developments in thinking were needed, and were supplied by the Catholic political economist Charles Stanton Devas (1848-1907), who published his *Groundwork of Economics* in 1883.¹⁶⁹ An old Etonian and Balliol man, Devas had converted to Catholicism before entering the university and supported the campaign (successful, under Cardinal Vaughan in 1893) for an end to the prohibition on Catholic attendance at Oxford and Cambridge. He had already (in 1876) published *Labour and Capital in England from a Catholic Point of View*; the views which he set out in this, in his *Groundwork* and in his other writings became, to a large extent, the English Catholic economic orthodoxy of their time. In those Catholic colleges where the subject was on the curriculum, his *Political Economy* became the standard textbook. Devas dominated the social question in the journals throughout this period, with the clearest and most detailed exposition of his views coming in a series of weighty articles in the *Month* and the *Dublin Review*.¹⁷⁰ They were also aired in the regular 'Reviews of Books' and 'Notes on Social Science' (sometimes anonymous but usually signed) for the *Dublin*.¹⁷¹ In these he was able to comment on the works of the other major writers, Catholic and non-Catholic, English, European and

¹⁶⁸ 'Mr Henry George and the Land', *Dublin*, July 1885, pp.329-335

¹⁶⁹ *Labour and Capital in England from the Catholic Point of View* (1876) comprised work already published in the *Month* and the *Catholic Review*. Devas's other published works included *Studies of Family Life: A Contribution to Social Science* (1886); *Political Economy* (1892); 'The Meaning and Aim of Christian Democracy' (CTS pamphlet, 1899); 'Socialism' (CTS pamphlet, 1906); 'Plain Words on Socialism - A Lecture', (CTS pamphlet, published posthumously in 1907). He also co-edited (with W.S. Lilly) a reissue of Byles' *Sophisms of Free Trade* (1903).

¹⁷⁰ The most important of these were: 'The Unemployed', *Month*, May 1886; 'How to Help the Unemployed', *Month*, June 1886; 'Fair Wages', *Month*, August 1886; 'What to do with the Landowners', *Dublin*, October 1886; 'Is England on the Road to Ruin?' *Month*, May 1887; 'Pro Aris et Focis', *Month*, February 1888; 'An Olive Branch on State Socialism', *Dublin*, April 1888; 'English Catholics and the Social Question', *Dublin*, January 1891; 'Shibboleths: Mr Lilly's Book on Politics', *Dublin*, October 1892; 'Catholic Socialism', *Dublin*, 1895; 'Christian Democracy', *Dublin*, January 1898. In addition to his 'Notes on Social Science' for the *Dublin* and sundry signed reviews, Devas seems to have been the author of many anonymous reviews and articles for the *Dublin* and other journals.

¹⁷¹ The *Dublin*'s 'Notes on Social Science', began in January 1892 and were usually, but not invariably, written by Devas. Although headed 'Notes on Social Science', they were listed in the contents page as

American, on political economy. His own works were widely reviewed and discussed by the other writers. Devas, like his non-Catholic counterparts, quite realised the nature of the gap to be filled. Looking back in 1892 he wrote that 'Ten years ago economic studies in England were in a very languishing state, the old political economy discredited, and justly so, and nothing new put in its place'.¹⁷² It is clear that the other Catholic writers were to an extent proud of Devas, and even grateful to him for supplying what had been much needed - a Catholic political economist of standing, to whom they could point when Socialists and others accused Catholics of knowing, and caring, nothing of political economy. He had no rival among English Catholics during this era. An anonymous reviewer in the *Month* referring to 'the debt of Catholic students of Political Economy in English-speaking countries to Mr Devas', went on to describe him as the one English Catholic writer who has 'devoted his life to obtaining a thorough mastery of all that is best in modern economic science, both European and American, and has set himself to deliver, primarily for the benefit of Catholic readers, in systematic form, a complete treatment of the science'.¹⁷³ He read papers before the British Association in 1894 and 1901, and contributed articles to (among others) the *Economic Journal* and the *International Journal of Ethics*.

This is not to suggest that all the Catholics of his day agreed with Devas. Indeed, for some, he was as almost as dangerous a radical as Cardinal Manning. His wide knowledge of events and developments in thought taking place in continental Europe prevented him from dismissing Socialistic ideas as so much empty theorising. Moreover, like Manning - whose social views he to a great extent shared - Devas felt that the current state of society was untenable and was clear-sighted on the attractions of Socialism for the poor and the need to combat Socialism rather than merely anathematise it. The poor 'knew their own misery', he commented, 'and here at least is an intelligible offer of something better'.¹⁷⁴ In 'How to Help the Unemployed', he went as far as to remark that while the Socialist plan was 'unjust' and 'mischievous', he 'should not like to say that it was more unjust and mischievous than the present condition of the poorer classes in this kingdom'.¹⁷⁵ Cardinal

'Notes on Political Economy', an inconsistency of terminology somewhat reflective of the wider debate in the 1890s. They appeared in most, but by no means every, issue of the journal.

¹⁷² 'Notes on Social Science', *Dublin*, January 1892, p.177

¹⁷³ Reviews, *Month*, April 1901, p.436. The review was of the second edition (re-written and enlarged) of *Groundwork of Economics*, published by Longmans for the Stonyhurst Philosophical Series, 1901.

¹⁷⁴ 'The Unemployed', p.7

¹⁷⁵ 'How to Help the Unemployed', p.166

Manning would have agreed wholeheartedly and indeed had made similar points himself, but many of Devas's readers found this radical in the extreme. C. Rayleigh Chichester summed up the conservative view (of Catholics and non-Catholics alike) when, in a letter to the *Tablet* protesting at Devas's comment that the writings of many political economists should be burnt, he wrote:

‘Their teaching is for those who have to govern and drive masses of men, and the system is a reflex, often indeed distorted, but still a reflex, of that larger system by which it appears to me the Almighty has deigned to rule and govern His creation as a whole’.¹⁷⁶

Devas could indeed be vituperative on the efforts of the mainstream political economists, remarking, for example, of Professor Marshall's attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Malthus that ‘Such desperate white-washing show how hard-pressed are our modern English economists by Socialism’.¹⁷⁷ His views on the results of traditional Political Economy were well summarised in ‘Work of Bread’. Writing on the existence of the workhouse, he remarked that

‘Our legislators had been deluged by a number of false and most un-Christian doctrines promulgated by Political Economists; the remonstrances of common sense and humanity have been held up to ridicule as being ignorant and sentimental; and a whole generation of Englishmen have been steeped in false teaching, and had to surrender humanity if they were to make any claim to enlightenment’.¹⁷⁸

Devas attacked many shibboleths dear to conservatives, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. In ‘Work or Bread’ he wrote that, ‘we comfort ourselves with the pious reflection that we are to have the poor always with us. Nothing is more true, and nothing less to the purpose of our present disorder’.¹⁷⁹ Above all, Devas emphasised that political economy was indivisibly a branch of the moral code. As a reviewer of the revised and enlarged edition of the *Groundwork* observed in the *Month*:

‘When Mr Devas first wrote his *Groundwork* of Political Economy he set himself in direct opposition to the classical teaching of the day on several large and vitally important questions, and in each of these the current of doctrine has changed and

¹⁷⁶ *Tablet*, 2/7/1887, p.21

¹⁷⁷ Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, July 1892, p.186.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Work or Bread’, p.311

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.305

set in his direction. The first and most fundamental of these was the inseparable connection between economic science and ethical principles'.¹⁸⁰

Here Devas was a strong supporter of Cardinal Manning whose great tenet this was, and in advance of the Anglican Reverend Wilfrid Richmond, who reached the same conclusion in *Christian Economics* (1888) and *Economic Morals*, a series of lectures given in 1889 and published in 1890. (The Reverend Richmond, unlike Devas, saw an immediate practical response to his works: Canon Henry Scott Holland drew on them in forming the Christian Socialist Union). Devas had, accordingly, no time for those who claimed to have an independent or impartial view on political economy. In this as in much else he was heavily influenced by Ruskin. As Ruskin had written of political economy as a 'soi-disant science' and a 'bastard science', so Devas wrote at various times of 'a disease called Political Economy' and 'a pretended science'.¹⁸¹ Devas felt that Socialism and unbridled capitalism were two equally iniquitous extremes, and he constantly used the metaphor of 'Scylla and Charybdis' to describe them, and wrote of the need to find a 'middle way' between the two, as for example, in 'What to do with the Landowners':

'...The Scylla of *laissez faire*, which means the tyranny of the strong over the weak, or else ... the Charybdis of Socialism, which means the tyranny of the Government over all the members of the State, whereas by taking the right course of Christian politics we can steer safely through this dangerous strait'.¹⁸²

When it came to advocating specific measures, Devas was most directly influenced by the French political economist Frederick Le Play. In France, some of Le Play's principles had found practical expression with the founding in 1871 of the *Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques des Ouvriers Français*. Organised by M. Maurice Meignen, a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, together with Count Albert de Mun, this federation of Catholic workmen quickly established branches across France. The *Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques des Ouvriers Français* was much discussed in the English Catholic press, especially after its organisation of a 'Pilgrimage of Labour' to the Vatican in October 1889: Devas and other writers often cited this evidence of what was being done on the continent to solve the problem of the poor. The clearest and most detailed exposition of Le Play's ideas in the journals was in H. A. Urquhart's 'Frederick Le Play', in *Merry England*. Le

¹⁸⁰ Reviews, *Month*, April 1901, p.437

¹⁸¹ In, for example, 'Pro Aris et Focis', *Month*, February 1888, p.154.

Play had perceived happy, prosperous societies as being dependent on three factors which combined to build a strong social edifice. Respect for the Decalogue and parental authority formed the foundations; the Clergy, together with the Government or the Sovereignty were the mortar; and the organisation of people into communities, together with the existence of private property and of patronage were the materials which bound the whole structure together. The first served to regulate free will and give training in moral law; the second maintained religion and public order; and the third enabled all to earn their daily bread. 'Patronage', as Urquhart noted, could mean the 'cash nexus', but only if it were founded on a system of permanent engagements, 'or else the relationship does not deserve the name of patronage, and becomes a mere money bargain'.¹⁸³ Both Le Play and Devas set great store on wage-earners having some form of domestic industry also available to them, but put still more emphasis on a paternalistic ideal of employer-employee relations. Le Play had attempted to put his own ideas into action with the founding of the *Unions de la Paix Sociale*: Devas attempted to convince his co-religionists in England of the force of Le Play's arguments, and it was this aspect of Devas's work which appealed most to his fellow Catholic writers on the social question. The belief that employers and employees had mutual obligations was central to Devas's thinking. Employees should not shirk their work, or withhold it on a whim, and employers should not extort more than a fair day's work from their employees, or dismiss them without notice and without thought to their future survival. Christianity sanctioned neither form of conduct. As he stated in 'Fair Wages':

'The relation between employers and workmen is merely a form of the ancient and intelligible relation of master and servant, which had been recognised and regulated for centuries, and which the Catholic Church has sanctioned and renovated'.¹⁸⁴

And, later in the same article:

'... the Christian tradition, recognizing the providential fitness of mastership and service, considers the relation as a part of family life, the master to act in great measure like a father to his servants; and they in a great measure to serve him like his children'.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² 'Landowners', p.250. Devas also employed this favourite metaphor in (among others) 'Work or Bread' and 'An Olive Branch on State Socialism'.

¹⁸³ 'Frederick Le Play', *Merry England*, April 1885, pp.375-376

¹⁸⁴ 'Fair Wages', p.501.

Any 'servant' (Devas's preferred term for all employees) must be paid enough to support 'a decent life, according to his or her condition'. A married workman, for example, must be provided with - or be paid enough to be able to buy - proper food and clothing for himself and his family; a decent and secure home; primary and technical education for his children, enabling them to hold the same social position as their father; and insurance against sickness, accident, stoppage of work, and old age. In 'Fair Wages', Devas observed that labour was 'a mere abstraction': you could not claim to be buying a man's labour because if he was selling anything, it was himself.¹⁸⁶ It was this fundamental error which had allowed the cruel system whereby wages were fixed entirely according to the position of the contracting parties. To refer to an arrangement where the choice for one party was between agreement or hunger as 'free contract' was, for Devas as for Manning, a theory 'as false as it was brutal'.¹⁸⁷ In the *Dublin* of October 1892, he reminded his readers that Catholics should take the utmost care: 'never to speak, for example, of the price of labour, but always of the wages of labourers; nor again of the supply of labour, but of the number of workpeople seeking to be hired'. Above all, they '... must never cease proclaiming the fiduciary character of property and the duties inseparably attached to it'.¹⁸⁸

Devas's belief in the need for the revival of the peasant-proprietor, and especially, the necessity for an equivalent in England to the American 'Homestead Exemptions Act' to protect small farmers from their creditors, seems to have amounted almost to an *idée fixe*. While he felt that land tax should be reformed and a new and heavy tax should be placed on all areas of land (except that unfit for cultivation or reserved for recreation) which were not being productively used, he also felt that the tax burden on rural landowners - especially small landowners and the peasantry - was unfair, and that some of it should be transferred to industrialists. The emphasis Devas laid on these aspects of legislation was striking. To some extent he shared the anxieties of the other Catholic writers about increases in social legislation from a powerful central State; yet as much or more than any of them, with his own arguments continually brought himself sharply up against the need for such legislation to change the current, unacceptable state of affairs.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.513

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.502

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.503

In a leading article on 'The Catholic Church and the New Age', the *Tablet* remarked:

'Now what is the great fact everywhere visible in the European public order? It is the fact which we usually call democracy. We may like it or dislike it ... But it is a fact which we are quite powerless to change ... The ancien régime is everywhere dead. It is impossible to bring it back to life, even if that were desirable, for the past never returns'.

The *Tablet* went on to argue that Catholics should not hanker after the ancien régime because a hundred years ago the Church was being crushed by tyrannical monarchies. It encouraged its readers to reflect that:

'The great outline of events - not the sin, the error by which they are disfigured - are from HIM. And of HIS appointment is the task with which we are confronted in this nineteenth century. That this task is our present Cardinal Archbishop declared so long ago as 1849, in words ... spoken when he was neither a Cardinal nor an Archbishop, nor even a Catholic ... "A new task is before us. The Church has no longer to deal with parliaments and princes, but with the masses and the people. Whether we will or no, this is our work. And for this work we need a new spirit and a new law of life. The refined, gentle, and shrinking character of calm and sheltered days will not stand the brunt of modern democracy"''.¹⁸⁹

Later the same year Leo XIII, acknowledging in his Encyclical of November 1885, *Immortale Dei* ('On the Christian Constitution of States') that the Church had traditionally been seen as allied to the ruling classes, stated that no one form of government was more acceptable than another: all that mattered was how far that Government was imbued with Christianity.

'... The right of ruling ... may rightly assume this or that form, provided that it promotes utility and the common good ... The rule of the government, therefore, should be just, and not that of a master but rather that of a father, because the power of God over man is most just and allied with a father's goodness. Moreover, it is to be carried on with a view to the advantage of the citizens, because they who are over others are over them for this cause alone, that they may see to the interests of the State'.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ 'Shibboleths: Mr Lilly's Book on Politics', *Dublin*, October 1892, p.436

¹⁸⁹ *Tablet*, 3/1/1885, p.7

¹⁹⁰ Reported in the *Tablet*, 14/11/1885, p.761

While no-one could interpret this as a ringing endorsement of democracy, the idea that all forms of Christian government were potentially equally acceptable, a point reiterated by Leo XIII and by Cardinals Manning and Vaughan, was in as far as it went an important admission for a Church traditionally allied with the ruling order. The *Tablet*, commenting on the Encyclical in a leading article, remarked:

‘... For some time past the signs have not been wanting, and to an observant eye they grow more numerous every day, that the Church is disentangling herself, slowly, but wisely and surely, from movements within which the popular mind she has been identified ... it has been taken for granted at home and abroad that the Church and Absolutism, the Church and Legitimism, the Church and “reaction”, were but so many names for the same thing, viewed now in its religious and now in its social and political aspects ... So far as Democracy is a fact, Pope Leo will take account of it in his action; so far as it is a principle, he will never condemn the deep-seated Catholic tradition which explains and limits and makes it reasonable ...’¹⁹¹

The brave words quoted above by no means typified the attitude of the *Tablet*, or of the Catholic writers in general, to the rise of democracy. However far the writers may have accepted in theory pronouncements on the equal acceptability of all forms of government, it is clear from the journals that the instinctive attitude to the rise of democracy was one of deep aversion. The more typical Catholic view can be summarised by the words (in 1885) of Cardinal Newman, who did not involve himself in the question of the problem of the poor: ‘When was demos other than a tyrant?’¹⁹² A leading article on ‘The Progress of Democracy’ in the *Tablet* remarked that at the prospect of the future lying at the ‘disposal of the yea or nay of absolute ignorance’, most of the journal’s readers felt like Louis XV: “‘After me the deluge’”¹⁹³ While the onslaught of democracy was acknowledged as inevitable, Cardinal Manning was almost alone among English Catholics in having optimism for the new order. With Dr Barry and a very few others, he had high hopes for a civilized and Christianized democracy, prophesying to the Editor of *Le Vingtième Siècle* (a magazine run by young Catholic followers of Comte de Mun) that the twentieth century would be ‘the day of the People and of a well-ordered, prospering, Christian commonwealth’.¹⁹⁴ (This much-quoted letter of January 1891 led to the Cardinal being accused by some of Socialism). While the Catholic writers in general seemed to fear that

¹⁹¹ ‘The Dead Hand’, *Tablet*, 19/12/1885, p.963

¹⁹² *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol XXXI, quoted in Newsome, (*Convert Cardinals*), *op. cit.*, p.338.

¹⁹³ *Tablet*, 17/11/1883, p.761

the onset of democracy would be as much, or even more inimical to the Faith as the current order of things, Cardinal Manning's approach was from another angle. He only feared the onset of democracy if the people, in the course of assuming their increased power, did not become 'Christianized': 'The people are yielding to the guidance of reason, even to the guidance of religion. If we can gain their confidence we can counsel them; if we show them a blind opposition they will have the power to destroy all that is good'.¹⁹⁵ It followed therefore that what other Catholics perceived as a threat, Manning saw as an unmissable opportunity. In a letter advising against the projected papal condemnation of the American working-men's association, the Knights of Labor, he said:

'Hitherto the world has been governed by dynasties; henceforth the Holy See will have to deal with the people, and it has bishops in close daily and personal contact with the people. The more clearly and strongly this is perceived, the stronger Rome will be. Never at any time has the episcopate been so detached from civil powers and so united in itself and with the Holy See. Failure to see and use these powers will breed much trouble and mischief'.¹⁹⁶

Both Newsome¹⁹⁷ and McClelland have pointed to Manning's Ultramontanism as the underpinning of his confidence in the potential of democracy. Indeed, McClelland has argued that Manning's Ultramontanism obliged the Cardinal to plead for the rights of labour, as only by aligning itself, on an international level, with the common people could the Church hope to speak with one, authoritative voice.¹⁹⁸

Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, perhaps Manning's most ardent and influential disciple on social issues and his supporter over the issue of the Knights of Labor, remarked of 'the problem of the poor' in America that:

'There are, indeed, grave social problems now engaging the earnest attention of the citizens of the United States; but I have no doubt that, these problems will be

¹⁹⁴ The letter was quoted in full in the *Tablet*, 10/1/1891, p.51 and in 'Letters', p.22

¹⁹⁵ Cardinal Manning to the Bishop-President of the Congress of Liège, 2/9/1890, in 'Letters'. The letter was printed in the original French in the *Tablet*, 13/9/1890, pp.410-411

¹⁹⁶ Printed in the *Tablet*, 7/5/1887, p.740. The *Tablet* commented that it had been asked by Cardinal Manning to publish 'the following correct version of a letter which, addressed to a member of the American hierarchy, has been extensively but inaccurately produced on both sides of the Atlantic'.

¹⁹⁷ Newsome, (*Convert Cardinals*), *op. cit.*, p.341

¹⁹⁸ V. Alan McClelland, 'The Formative Years 1830-92', pp.5-9, in (eds.) McClelland and Hodgetts, *From Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 Years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850-2000* (1999)

solved by the calm judgment and sound sense of the American people without violence or revolution or any injury to individual right'.¹⁹⁹

This was a degree of confidence in the masses which few English Catholic writers shared. The more usual Catholic tone on democracy was one of a pessimistic resignation to the inevitable, and of some impatience for those with higher expectations; as, for example, the *Tablet* had occasional sarcasms for Cardinal Gibbons's 'idealisation of the ballot'.²⁰⁰ 'Legislation', observed an anonymous reviewer in the *Month* of Bishop Bagshawe's 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor', 'never goes beyond the spirit prevalent among the legislators'.²⁰¹ The dominant class in a Protestant community were unlikely to legislate against their own economic interests, and if forced to do so by the growing strength of the people, the consequences would probably be disastrous. Devas, with his emphasis on the 'master and servant' relationship and the unchanging order, provided a theoretical framework for the instinctive feeling of his contemporaries on the extension of the franchise and all tendencies towards a lessening of social distinctions. Catholic feeling here was in general far closer to Devas than to Manning. As Fr Bernard Vaughan SJ²⁰² remarked in a speech to the Catholic Social Union:

'... if universal suffrage and universal education have done much to break down class privileges, and to open out the avenues of wealth and power to universal competition, they have done perhaps still more to create class hatred, and to set up wealth, place, and pleasure as supreme objects of human worship'.²⁰³

Devas saw the trend away from social distinctions as a great 'error'; for him the best chance of ameliorating the lot of the working classes lay with an emphasis on, rather than a reduction in, existing class distinctions. He made it clear (for example, in 'Fair Wages'), that if employers ceased to adopt a paternalistic stance to their employees and instead thought in terms of 'partnership', with the one providing the goods and management, the other the labour, then the workers would be deprived, disastrously, of their employers' 'fatherly care' (the great Catholic ideal of the workplace), and worse still, the door would

¹⁹⁹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 23/4/1887, p.645

²⁰⁰ *Tablet*, 16/4/1892, p.606

²⁰¹ *Month*, April 1885, p.583

²⁰² Younger brother of the Cardinal Archbishop and elder brother of Fr John S Vaughan, Bernard John Vaughan had been educated at Stonyhurst. He undertook parish work among the poor in Manchester, and from 1899, in London. He became perhaps the foremost Catholic writer on Socialism in Edwardian times, but was best known for a series of much-publicised sermons on 'The Sins of Society' which attacked, not economic injustice, but gambling and lax sexual morals among the upper-classes.

²⁰³ Quoted in a leading article in the *Tablet*, 5/5/1894, pp.698-702

be open for the advance of Socialism. Moreover, although Devas could perceive the attractiveness of the theory 'partnership', for him it was of very limited application. Worse, it was based on a fallacy and pandered to wrong-headed notions:

'This theory... is in admirable harmony with many of our popular notions about liberty and equality. It being a fundamental axiom that Jack's as good as his master, this view of labour pays due attention to Jack's dignity. He is not a slave working for another, but a partner working for himself ... And there is a pleasant moral tone in this theory, uniting all men in a fraternal partnership, that contrasts favourably with the previous crude and coarse theory of the workmen selling his labour. Only observe well that the theory of partnership as completely as that of sale removes the obligation of bestowing fatherly care on workpeople and dependants. For we are to have equality, not dependence; we are to speak of fellow-producers, not of master and servants; the relations between the partners may (or may not) be fraternal; they certainly cannot be paternal and filial'.²⁰⁴

A reviewer (probably Devas himself) in the *Month* of February 1892 of 'Pamphlets and Books on the Social Question' which included works by Fr Meyer and Fr Lehmkuhl of Germany and Fr de Pascal of France, made the same points on the false concept of partnership, pointing to Fr Lehmkuhl 'whom none will suspect of want of sympathy with the work-people and zeal in defence of their rights' for support, and concluding:

'The contract is one of service, and implies subordination, not equality. No doubt in a century which has taken as its motto, *non serviam*, there has been a great unwillingness to admit this, and many euphemisms put in place of the word servant; but truths are not altered by unwillingness to receive them. Only remember the further truth that the subordination of the servants implies the responsibility of the master ...'.²⁰⁵

Devas maintained throughout this era his emphasis on the fundamentally unchanging relations between workers and their employers; it was central to his thinking, forming part of a wider belief in the unchanging nature of society. His emphasis on this point blinkered his wider social vision and prevented a fuller realisation of contemporary developments within the working-classes. It was a point he clung to while knowing himself to be out of step with the modern trend. The drift towards more democratic language in describing the workplace, for example, had received a form of official recognition when in 1871, the 'Employers and Workmen' Act replaced the old 'Master and Servant' Act. Nor was Devas inclined to underestimate the importance of terminology. On the contrary, he argued that

²⁰⁴ 'Fair Wages', pp.503-504

Catholic employers should not use 'hands' to describe their workers, as this displayed an un-Christian attitude; a point not dissimilar to Engels's objection to the word 'operatives' as demeaning. Devas deliberately used the old terminology to underline his view of the unchanging order: the entire conception of 'partnership' was misguided, and it was a modern pretence - almost an affectation - to suggest that class distinctions could be removed. Rather, the classes should be bound together by Christianity - specifically, through charity and through guilds - in a way which strengthened rather than weakened social distinctions:

'Let us have sense enough to distinguish the true Christian reverence for the poor and the sense of equality before God, from the false un-social and un-Christian declamation about liberty and equality, which is either mere cant, which is neither believed in nor acted on, or else is a dangerous error leading straight to socialism ... Employers and workmen are not buyers and sellers of labour; nor again are they partners in a joint business; they are masters and servants. This is the plain truth, which no amount of talk can alter ... And speaking as one of the Christian school of social science I say our position is this: Whereas the "Liberal" or un-Christian economists miserably fly into thickets and hide in entanglement, we stand in the open and boldly take the socialistic bull by the horns. *We do not care two straws for all that liberty and equality.*²⁰⁶ Obedience and submission and self-sacrifice, and each keeping to his own place, are the characteristics that we admire. And we say that with human nature as it is, and in the actual position that man holds on earth, inequality is a good thing, the distinction of rich and poor is a good thing, the distinction of masters and servants is a good thing'.²⁰⁷

Good, because the distinctions gave an opportunity for literature, science, and art to flourish, and because they gave opportunities for almsgiving by the rich and resignation on the part of the poor. Social and economic equality was not only unrealistic, it was un-Christian. The belief that God had disposed that some should be servants and some masters, and that to question this flew in the face of Providence, underpinned all Catholic thinking on this subject, but only Devas said so quite so decidedly. Nor did Devas have any time for those arguments which sought to prove that the 'idle rich' served an economic function: rather, each of them were necessarily 'receivers of unearned increment' and the sooner 'we make up our minds to meet this fact the better ...'. Once again, he concluded trenchantly:

²⁰⁵ Review of Fr Lehmkuhl's *Arbeitsvertrag und Strike* (1891), *Month*, p.279

²⁰⁶ My italics.

²⁰⁷ 'Fair Wages', pp.509-511

‘Nor have we any difficulty in meeting each particular case of inequality. When I begin to clamour for your estate, and complain that you have ten thousand acres and I not ten perches, you can give me a better argument than mere threats; you can tell me to go back to my catechism, and be contented with the state of life to which Providence has called me. It is a good answer to me, and is the only good one’.²⁰⁸

In one of the few direct references in the journals to the Christian Socialist movement, a reviewer (almost certainly Devas)²⁰⁹ of the *Economic Journal* took Canon Scott Holland and his followers to task for being misled by superficial modernities into thinking that the fundamental structure of society had changed.

‘A lady travels now, it is true, to the South of France in a *coupé-lit* not in a *diligence*: but her duties to her husband and her children remain the same. In many countries great numbers of the poorer class have or are supposed to have votes: but as before they must eat their bread in the sweat of their brow ... It may perhaps sound better to be “striving for the revelation of the new order”, to “assimilate ... the new wants and hopes of human nature”, and for each State to work out “its progressive destiny”. And it is certainly a cold-water douche on these high aspirations to be told bluntly that suffering and hardship must ever be man’s lot; that nothing better or nobler than what Christianity has already shown us in social life will ever be found; and that without a return to Christian principles no happy solution of the social question is possible’.²¹⁰

The Anglican authors of *Lux Mundi*, the 1889 symposium volume on the doctrine of the Incarnation, had expressed their conviction that: ‘... the epoch in which we live is one of profound transformation, intellectual and social, abounding in new needs, new points of view, new questions’.²¹¹ Devas made the point over and over again that there were no ‘new needs’ or ‘new questions’; that fundamentally society and the world of work were as they had always been. If there was a more profound difference between the England of the 1790s and that of the 1890s than the change from the *diligence* to the *coupé-lit*, then Devas shut his eyes to it, despite the time he and other writers spent in lamenting the changing times.

²⁰⁸ ‘Landowners’, pp.247-248

²⁰⁹ Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, January 1892. As was occasionally the case with the *Dublin*’s ‘Notes on Social Science’, the authorship of this part of the Notes is unclear. The rest of the Notes were over Devas’s name; this part seems to have been added as an afterthought. Certainly, both the sentiments and terminology are entirely those of Devas, and he made similar points elsewhere.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.183

²¹¹ Preface, p.viii, *Lux Mundi*, 1897.

Society had been transformed, not least in that power had come to be based not on status, but on possession, but the Catholic writers could at once lament the passing of the old order without fully taking into consideration the extent to which society had changed. The working-classes, as the radical Catholic writer Dr William Barry remarked (quoting from the *Journal of the Knights of Labor*) were becoming ‘more and more parts of an industrial social machine’.²¹² the ways in which the masses lived and worked had changed beyond recognition over the past century, but Devas for one could still expect their ideas, attitudes and aspirations not to have changed at all. This was a fundamental weakness in the Catholic debate on the social question.

A similar ambivalence lay behind Devas’s attitude to the growth of ‘joint-stock’ companies and of corporations. Devas was astute in realising at the time what has become obvious to economists with hindsight, that this growth was probably the most significant economic development of the era. These large, impersonal organisations seemed to represent the antithesis of Devas’s ideal for the workplace, because, as he admitted himself, they were, with ‘their delegated management and diminution of personal responsibility’, likely to render impossible

‘the intimate personal relation that ought to bind together master and workmen, the fatherly care that every owner should have for those who work on his property, the union of employers and workmen, of one trade or one locality into a common association or guild’.²¹³

Yet Devas passed quickly from seeing the threat offered by large corporations to perceiving their size as a potential opportunity for men and masters combining to settle issues of wages or hours, without Government interference. Devas’s optimism for the large corporations was shared by some Catholics on the continent, especially in those parts of eastern and central Europe where guilds still existed. The idea that paternalistic employers would speak up for the rights of their workers rather as aristocratic employers of old might protect their family servants was not confined to Catholics, forming part of the wider nostalgia for a bygone Christian social order. Reviewing W.S. Lilly’s book, *Shibboleths*²¹⁴ (which he called, ‘A brilliant volume of essays on the first principles of politics’) Devas

²¹² Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, July 1892 (check), p187.

²¹³ ‘Olive Branch’, p.330

²¹⁴ Published in 1892.

commented that while Lilly was right to insist on the need for an authority for settling at least the minimum of wages,

‘... he seems to me to attribute too much to government officials, too little to the action of corporations, or bodies composed of both masters and workmen, of which we see germs among ourselves in our Board of Conciliation, and to which the Papal Encyclical on Labour has called such particular attention ...’.²¹⁵

Ten years later, in a review for the *Dublin* of ‘Commercial Trusts: the Growth and Rights of Aggregated Capital’, he acknowledged that vast combinations were ‘almost a necessary consequence’ of technical advances in communications, and insisted ‘... the laws protecting the weaker members of society must be adapted to the new conditions of business ... the great combinations must be duly charged with great responsibilities (such as insurance of their workmen) ...’.²¹⁶ By the end of this era, Devas seemed, along with many of his contemporaries, to have lost some of the optimism he had earlier felt for Boards of Conciliation, but his willingness to see considerable legislation to regulate conditions in large companies - provided they remained as private rather than State-run institutions - was consistent with his long-term views.

Allied to the need to maintain the existing social order were very real doubts about the fitness of the working-classes - in a Protestant, urban, materialistic and increasingly secular society - to wield any degree of economic or political power. A.J. Christie summed up the prevailing doubts in the *Month*:

‘Who can imagine that the men and women who have been reared without God, and under agnosticism and infidelity, could form the beginning of a self-commanding and self-denying charity, without which there can be no peace and prosperity?’ ... ‘nothing is less likely to speak the voice of God than the sentence of universal suffrage’.²¹⁷

In ‘A Chat about the Times’, A. Clive compared the working-classes of England to the plebeians of Rome after Tarquin, who received more and more nominal political rights while, through their poverty, they became more and more unfit for the exercise of such

²¹⁵ ‘*Shibboleths*: Mr Lilly’s Book on Politics’, p.436

²¹⁶ *Dublin*, October 1902, p.466. Review of John R. Dos Passos, *Commercial Trusts: the Growth and Rights of Aggregated Capital*, New York, 1901.

²¹⁷ ‘Catholic Reform’, pp. 39, 41

responsibility.²¹⁸ Perhaps the most uncompromisingly 'anti-democratic' tone can be found in an article in the *Dublin Review* of October 1890 on 'Catholics and Technical Education' (written in the wake of the Technical Education Act of 1889). This was signed 'Editorial' and could equally have been the work of Fr Driffield or of Bishop Vaughan: the latter took an especial interest in technical education, and the terminology is similar to that used by him elsewhere. The article begins uncompromisingly:

'The universal insubordination of the working classes is undoubtedly the most formidable problem confronting society at the present day. The growing discontent with what must always be the condition of the majority of mankind, tends to assume the dimensions of a general revolt against the primeval curse of Adam. Religion and civilization are alike threatened by the movement; the former by the spirit of rationalism which accompanies and promotes it, the latter by the implied obliteration of those finer gradations of the social hierarchy which are at once the cause and result of progress....' ²¹⁹

The writer felt that popular schooling had been largely to blame in giving working-men far more education than they needed to do their work, leading to a contempt for manual labour which had intensified the over-crowding of the trades and professions, and the drift from the country to the towns. Four years later Miss Ada Streeter²²⁰ similarly deplored the 'senseless prejudices' which prevent poor girls from taking employment as domestic servants, concluding that: '... It cannot be too much insisted on with regard to all classes and both sexes of the unemployed, that the worker must adapt himself to the work required of him, and not wait until work shapes itself to suit his tastes'.²²¹

On the issue of rising democracy, the *Merry England* was out on its own. Far from sharing the misgivings of the other journals, it reflected the influence of Cardinal Manning in the way in which it emphasised and welcomed the progress already made by the working-classes. This formed part of the journal's wider optimism for the next century. The overall feeling prevalent throughout *Merry England* is that society was changing for the better, and changing rapidly. In 'A Ropemakers' Saturday Night' James Ashcroft Noble observed from his own experience that the working-classes were fully capable of debating political

²¹⁸ 'A Chat about the Times', *Month*, August 1884, pp.489-490.

²¹⁹ 'Catholics and Technical Education', p.344.

²²⁰ A. Streeter (Miss Ada Streeter) contributed several essays on social and other questions to the *Month*, including, 'On Some Methods of Dealing with the Employed' (February 1894); 'The Foreign Labour Colonies', (April 1894), 'The East End' (February 1895); and 'Some Impressions of the International Congress of Women' (August 1899).

and intellectual issues in an intelligent way.²²² In 'St George for Sheffield', his commentary on Ruskin's Guild of St George, the Catholic architect Bernard Whelan spoke of the condition of the working classes in Sheffield as a record that 'may be handed down with some confidence to the disgust of a not distant posterity'.²²³ In 'On the Excessive Concentration of Capital and its Remedies' J. Dewe wrote of

'... the increased refinement and education of the masses... While physically suppressed, trodden upon, and despised by the wider class, they are making rapid strides in other respects, and in development of reason and judgement, in the power of analysis and foresight, and in moral and intellectual influence, are beginning to assume, if not a superior, at least an equal footing with that of the otherwise more favoured members of the community'.²²⁴

There was support, however in the *Dublin Review* from Charles Gatty (later of the Catholic Social Union). In a letter to the *Tablet* remarking on a comment by Fr Rider to the CTS that property was 'being slowly bled to death', he pointed out that Catholics and Nonconformists owed their religious emancipation to democracy. Moreover, he argued,

'The democrat found himself fettered in conscience, ill-educated, plundered of public rights and property, cruelly taxed in the necessities of life, at the mercy of landlord and monopolist, badly sheltered, miserably fed, and with no voice in his own Government. Will the Catholic Church blame him if he emancipated his conscience, bettered his education, restored his local government, abolished the taxes on his daily bread, organised trades unions, insisted on sanitary inspection, and carried free trade and the franchise?'.²²⁵

There was support, too, from Dr Barry. In 'Labour and Capital, Limited', (a commentary in the *Dublin* of April 1893 on Devas's *Groundwork of Economics and Political Economy* and the Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*), he argued that it was inevitable that people newly enfranchised would expect to see an improvement in their economic conditions: 'Votes have been flung in fright or disdain to the millions of workers; and they are beginning to reckon that votes should mean for them bread, light, shelter, and, in general, what is called civilization'.²²⁶

²²¹ 'On some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', *Month*, February 1894, p.161

²²² 'A Ropemakers' Saturday Night', *Merry England*, June 1883.

²²³ 'St George for Sheffield', *Merry England*, February 1884, p.240.

²²⁴ 'On the Excessive Concentration of Capital and its Remedies', *Merry England*, September 1893, p.388

²²⁵ *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, pp.65-66

²²⁶ 'Labour and Capital, Limited', *Dublin*, April 1893, pp.341-342.

In the words of J. Dewe, 'The burning problem of the age' was not the insubordination of the working-classes, but rather how to make 'their physical and material condition ... correspond with their intellectual and moral progress'.²²⁷ A comparison between these remarks and Devas' strictures on continental Socialists is illuminating:

'They reason as though it were not part of the nature of things that the bulk of the cultivators in any land under any system must altogether do without servants, and change their shirt not oftener than once a week. But it is so. The mass of men must be rude and squalid, alike whether living in virtue or vice, in contentment and security, or in misery and apprehension ... we recognise that all wealth and refinement is of necessity the slender apex of a great pyramid of poverty and rudeness'.

To believe that squalor and rudeness were serious evils, Devas went on, was to fall into a 'pagan error': they were trifles which could co-exist with leading a 'good life' - with the inevitable proviso that the poverty be rural rather than urban:

'... rustic rudeness can co-exist, and wherever Christianity has got the upper hand has co-existed, with much knowledge and appreciation of higher things, exalted doctrines, heroic examples, beautiful liturgies and ceremonies; and beneath a rough exterior there can be so much true courtesy and kindness that astonished travellers return and tell us they have found the ragged dwellers in hovels and huts behaving like gentlemen'.²²⁸

Fr John S. Vaughan agreed that many millions must, inevitably, always live in conditions of 'comparative misery and want'. The only way to counter the misery arising from the longing for equality which had resulted from the spread of socialist ideas was once again to imbue the poor with Christianity, so that they realised that poverty was not dishonourable, that labour and a humble position could have dignity, and that fatigue would (ultimately) be rewarded. They would then not only abstain from 'unlawful rebellion, from wine and evil, bloodshed and assassination' but would be happy in their lot, 'and enjoy peace in the midst of poverty and calm in the midst of trouble'.²²⁹

On the subject of the wider increases in democracy - and in discussing this question the writers were usually referring to all 'levelling' movements rather than merely to the

²²⁷ 'On the Excessive Concentration of Capital', p.389

²²⁸ 'Landowners', p.255

extension of the franchise - the writers realised, and even relished, the fact that they were swimming against the tide. This was displayed in dozens of passing remarks, like that of the *Tablet* in a review of the second edition of Whyte Avis's 'The Catholic Girl in the World' (1899), which approved of the author's advice that ladies should not gossip with their servants: 'in contradiction though it may be with the false theories of equality prevailing at the present day'.²³⁰

Nowhere was the attitude to democracy prevailing among Catholic writers more clearly illustrated than in the *Tablet*'s stance on the issue of votes for women. The standard Catholic view on the sphere of women might be described as broadly that of the age, with an added emphasis on the mother's importance in the religious training of children destined to grow up in a non-Catholic and increasingly secular society. Yet as the *Tablet* stated, it had 'a kindness for Women's Suffrage ...'.²³¹ It is characteristic of the journals that they all harboured grave doubts over the recent extension of the franchise; and the *Tablet* was unable to understand why working-men of all but the lowest classes had been granted the vote, middle-class, propertied women were denied it. The *Tablet* returned to this point again and again. If women were denied the vote on the grounds that their experiences could not give them the same insight as men into, for example, foreign policy or constitutional matters, then how much more must this be the case for butchers or costermongers:

'What a queer kind of cant it is to talk about the unjustness of women to vote, and then to enfranchise the clodhopper and the coal-heaver. As a nation, we have decided long ago that it was better that the people should rule themselves in a blind, groping, and often unwise way than that they should be ruled, however intelligently, by others'.²³²

The *Tablet* even went so far as to suggest that a wife might have a vote where her husband did not, arguing that as suffrage was based upon a property qualification, the owner - whether husband or wife - should be the one entitled to vote.²³³ Later, a leading article commented:

²²⁹ 'Social Disturbances - their Cause and Cure', p.346

²³⁰ *Tablet*, 16/9/1899, p.451

²³¹ *Tablet*, 16/7/1892, p.92

²³² 'Notes', *Tablet*, 1/6/1889, p.846

²³³ *Tablet*, 29/6/1889, p.1008

‘The principle and justification of successive Reform Bills has been this, and this only, that the special interest of unrepresented classes are not properly cared for. On what other possible ground could even Mr Gladstone defend the vote of the agricultural labourers?’²³⁴

In fact, as Walsh has observed, the *Tablet* and especially, Snead-Cox, were to become well-known for their opposition to the women’s suffrage movement.²³⁵ This certainly was not the paper’s stance in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet the injustice for the *Tablet* lay not in the fact that middle-class women could not vote, but that so many working-class men could, when they seemed quite unfit to do so. Similarly, while Catholic doubts on the issue of state old-age pensions were largely reflective of the wider debate - the chief concern being that they might militate disastrously against working-class thrift and self-reliance - an article in 1892 expressed cautious approval of pensions for teachers. The clear implication was that pensions might be made available to those of a middle-class calling without danger to their moral fibre.²³⁶

The advance of democracy was still inextricably linked in many (not only Catholic) minds with anti-clericalism, public disorder, Socialism, and the French Revolution. The *Tablet*, in an article entitled ‘Dr Barry on the Interpretation of Scripture’ made one of the few explicit references in the journals to what must have been a wide underlying concern. The Catholic Church is hierarchical in structure. If the people were increasingly to question, and disobey, their temporal betters, might they not begin to take the same attitude to their spiritual leaders? The Nonconformists, after all, had a form of religious socialism. The *Tablet* commented:

‘His [Dr Barry’s] complaint is that any distinction should be drawn between the general body of the faithful and the professed theologian; and he wants to know by what right the latter reserve to themselves the privilege of an esoteric liberty of thought in matters theological which they deny to the flock ... a way of putting it which theologians would repudiate with vehemence ... they know very well that the significance of these controversies will be dangerously misunderstood by a public which has not the training to appreciate the limits of what is involved. We are experiencing in those days the fatal consequences to which our political and social future is exposed by the necessity of setting up incompetent people as judges of the tendency and effects of the various party measures. We can observe also the effects of the self-same policy on the religious bodies outside the Church, which

²³⁴ *Tablet*, 30/4/1892, p.685

²³⁵ Walsh, *op. cit.*, p.23

²³⁶ *Tablet*, 23/7/1892, pp.122-123

has led to the widespread decay of religious conviction among them ... it surely is, and surely will be, recognised by the faithful themselves ... that it is better for the people to leave the questions to be debated among the theologians, and to remain meanwhile content with the assurance that the Church which has lasted so long, and displays so many marks of divinity, will be able to work her way triumphantly through the present perplexities'.²³⁷

Dr Barry was by this time no stranger to controversy: on this occasion the *Tablet* commented: 'We simply take Dr Barry for what he has become - a recognised Catholic exponent of certain advanced views, and leave it to professed theologians to call him to account as far as they think needful'.

The traditional Catholic wariness about democracy can only have been exacerbated by the general lack among the writers of direct contact with the working-classes, a lack which threatened fatally to undermine their debate on the social question. Where the Catholic writers were informed by contact with the working-classes at all, it came from ministry or social work among the very poorest (and usually, with the women and children), who made up the mass of the English Catholic population - not from the 'respectable', auto-didactic and articulate men who formed the most influential working class leaders of this era. Those few, including Cardinal Manning, who did have such direct contact (especially, in Manning's case, through the League of the Cross) were noticeably more optimistic for democracy. Many of the writers had no direct contact with the working-classes, with all their information coming at second-hand, and from middle-class sources. This point, not normally acknowledged or regretted by the writers themselves, was made forcefully by Fr McCarrick, a priest in the mining community at Cannock Chase, in a letter to the *Tablet* written during a miners' strike:

'Your correspondents have made an onslaught on me because of the information they have received from the employers. Have they visited a miner's cottage to ascertain the details of the other side of the picture? Does any one of them know personally even one miner? Like the rest of their class, I am afraid they know very little of the miner or the conditions of his labour, unless from the lips and writings of the employers'.²³⁸

The lack of contact with all of the poorest members of the working-classes explains, at least in part, some otherwise inexplicable gaps in awareness apparent in the journals.

²³⁷ *Tablet*, 7/3/1891, p.366

²³⁸ *Tablet*, 11/11/1893, p.780

William C. Maude, a layman and barrister, describing his fears about the possible introduction of an old age pension scheme in 'The Poor Man's Prospects', demonstrated a profound lack of understanding on the feelings of the working-classes towards the Poor Law, remarking that:

'After all has been said and done, 7s a week paid through the Post Office would be very much the same as 7s paid by the Guardians. The great advantage claimed for the former is the avoidance of the taint of pauperism. Personally I have never been able quite to work out why money given through Guardians is considered to carry a taint from which assistance given through any other agency is free'.²³⁹

Yet by this time the loathing of the working-classes for the Poor Law was a *sine qua non* among social reformers. Both Manning and Devas had long since understood it,²⁴⁰ and in the same issue of the *Month* in which Maude's article appeared, even the conservative Cardinal Vaughan accepted the advice of a visiting deputation from a working-party on old-age pensions that the working-classes would shun any pension system which formed part of the Poor Law'.²⁴¹ Significantly, there is a total absence of working-class writing in the Catholic journals of this time, although both Tom Mann and John Burns, for example, appeared in the prestigious *Nineteenth Century* during the 1890s.

The radicalism of the working classes at this time should, of course, not be exaggerated; contemporary Socialists and modern historians alike have commented on their lack of class feeling. Yet the Catholic writers were apt to credit the working-classes with no capacity or inclination for serious political thought; indeed, many believed that Socialism and all forms of political discontent had been visited on the gullible poor by their social betters. The *Tablet*, in a leading article on 'Political Assumptions' took issue with a recent assertion that the people as a whole were 'Radical'. Apart, the writer felt, from the large 'and greatly demoralised' centres of population, the vast majority of Englishmen had no desire for 'organic' change, but instead were content that freedoms should continue to 'slowly broaden down' as they had for the last thousand years (a glimpse of the prevailing belief in continuing gradual improvement in the lot of the poor and in the demoralising effects of urbanisation).²⁴² The only real 'Radicals' consisted of professional politicians and their

²³⁹ 'The Poor Man's Prospects', *Month*, October 1899, p.386

²⁴⁰ Manning pointed out that he was old enough to have sat in 1833 as chairman of a vestry, administering alms under the old Poor Law. Reported in the *Tablet*, 10/12/1887, p.931.

²⁴¹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 7/10/1899, p.579

²⁴² *Tablet*, 13/9/1884, p.403

dupes. The *Month*, reviewing in June 1890 the latest edition of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, remarked that the assertion of human independence and declaration of enmity to religion had arisen in and had come down to the lower strata of society from the upper. Cardinal Vaughan's remarks, in a speech on 'A Key to the Social Problem' given to the Catholic Conference of 1893, were typical. He felt that, 'under a specious plea of improving their condition and securing their happiness', socialist agitators poisoned the hearts and minds of the working-classes 'with mischievous theories and wicked proposals, setting before them prospects which are deceptive and utterly unobtainable, and filling them with discontent'.²⁴³

The middle-class leaders of the temperance movement campaigned for more control at local level over the drink trade, seeing the poor as the victims of the unscrupulous brewers and distillers who combined to protect their own interests. A leader in the *Tablet* on 'How to Diminish Drunkenness' argued that:

'... the English public-house is, and must remain, the club of the poor, men and women alike. This fact must be faced. The question is whether legislation or charitable efforts should make the public-house what it ought to be. We confess that we see no particular need for any appeal to the charitable. What is wanted should be done as a matter of business, and must be done when once the people have been aroused to the fact that they are, as matters now stand, being made the prey of private gain'.²⁴⁴

In some ways this article showed some advance on the traditional position. It was frank about the inevitable appeal of the public house to the poor, rather than homilising on why they should keep away; it also recognised a need, at least in the context, for social legislation. At the same time, it displayed a considerable degree of political naivety. It does not require an exaggerated belief in the class-consciousness or socio-economic understanding of the working classes of the day to raise the question of how the people were to come to perceive themselves as victims of economic exploitation by brewers and distillers without extending the same principle to their employers and landlords. Yet the middle-class Catholic writers seemed to think it would be possible - and clearly many of them found it possible themselves.

²⁴³ Reported in the *Tablet*, 7/10/1893, p.569

²⁴⁴ *Tablet*, 12/9/1885, p.405

A cloud continued to hang over the word 'democracy' until the end of this period. The *Tablet* remarked in a report of a meeting of the London branches of the Catholic Social Union held at St James's Hall:

'One may, perhaps, be permitted to wonder whether the allusions which were made by more than one speaker to the fact that the Church in the past has always shown herself essentially democratic, are not open to some misunderstanding. In the sense that she recognises no distinctions in the value of human souls, the Catholic Church is assuredly democratic - but it was probably not that truism which drew the answering cheers at St James's Hall. No doubt in the past the Church has time after time protected the oppressed, but her care was not to serve one class at the expense of another, but to see justice done. If she is to be called democratic because in earlier ages the oppressors she withstood were usually princes and despots, is she to be called essentially aristocratic if in the future she has to defend the few and not the many, and has to stand in the path of triumphant democracy to forbid injustice? Such epithets seem to us misleading. The Church will oppose the powerful wrong-doer, and whether the wrong-doer be a Prince or a Parliament, a Caucus or a King, is immaterial and accidental'.²⁴⁵

A year later, in the *Downside Review*, Prior Ford, in describing the medieval guilds as strongly social, added 'we might add democratic but for the fear of throwing back an evil shadow on the word social ...'.²⁴⁶ By 1898 Devas felt that it was acceptable to speak of 'Christian Democracy': indeed in his view it had become almost necessary, because there were so many who still viewed the Catholic Church as anti-democratic. For every ten people confused and mislead by Catholic use of the term, he felt, there would be ten thousand confused and mislead if they did not use it.²⁴⁷ He spoke on 'The Meaning and Aim of Social Democracy' at the 1898 Catholic Conference, and Fr Gasquet spoke on 'Christian Democracy in the Pre-reformation Period' on the same occasion.²⁴⁸ Devas felt that the word 'democracy' was effectively given Papal approval in the 1901 Encyclical *Graves de communi re*, but even then, only if suitably qualified:

'Leo XIII, by explaining the nature of true political liberty, has secured this word for Catholic use; and recently, by a bold stroke and by assigning the prefix of Christian, has secured for us also the word democracy. We ought, indeed, from what has been said already, to understand clearly that democracy, in the sense of a form of government, is just as much approved as any other form and no more. But the word is current in a different sense, meaning what is favourable to the common

²⁴⁵ *Tablet*, 5/5/1894, pp.685-686

²⁴⁶ 'Beccles Corpus Christi Gild', p.230

²⁴⁷ 'Christian Democracy', *Dublin*, January 1898, pp.139-142

²⁴⁸ Reported in the *Tablet*, 3/9/1898, p.378

people; and Socialism, professing to be most favourable to them, has widely assumed, especially in Central Europe, the title of social democracy. Yet in reality, what is most favourable to the common people is precisely the Christian commonwealth and Christian society; and thus, in these days, there is a singular fitness in the use of the term Christian democracy...'.²⁴⁹

By the 1906 the newly-founded Catholic Federation felt able to declare that its aim was to contest 'the growing hosts of enemies of God, Religion and Social Democracy': in fact, as Doyle has observed, its real battle was against modern society.²⁵⁰

Amid all the discussion on the merits of the Middle Ages, Cardinal Manning was alone in suggesting, in 'How shall Catholics Vote at the Coming Parliamentary Election?', that the recent extension of the franchise might in fact be seen as '... the largest return in the history of our popular liberties to the shire-motes and folk-motes and ward-motes of the Saxon monarchy'.²⁵¹ The suggestion that the early Christians, in holding all things in common, had been practising a form of Socialism, was raised from time to time by Socialists and by the more radical Catholic writers, including Dr Barry, and Charles Gatty of the Catholic Social Union, who remarked in a letter to the *Tablet* that:

'the Socialist attempts in the world what the religious orders of the Catholic Church realise in every community. It may be a dream, but it was the first ever indulged in by the immediate followers of our Lord'.²⁵²

More usually the argument was summarily dismissed by Catholic writers; as, for example, by Devas, who in 'Christian Democracy' explained that the mistake arose either from orthodox writers being taken out of context, or the perversions of heretics being taken as doctrine of the Church.²⁵³ This was in marked contrast to the Christian Socialists, to whose thinking the argument that many of the Church fathers were socialists and communists - and indeed, that the New Testament (especially the Sermon on the Mount) showed that Jesus Christ was a socialist - was central. Nor was there anywhere to be found in the Catholic discussions of the problem of the poor anything approaching the attitudes of those at the radical end of the Christian Socialist movement. The first inkling of any feeling of the type in the Catholic journals came at the very end of this period, with Fr Cuthbert's

²⁴⁹ 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', pt. one, *Dublin*, April 1902, p.302

²⁵⁰ Peter Doyle, ('Catholic Federation'), *op. cit.*, pp.470-476

²⁵¹ 'How shall Catholics Vote at the Coming Parliamentary Election?', p.410

²⁵² *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, pp.65-66

²⁵³ 'Christian Democracy', p.136

cautious suggestion that ‘in so far as the ideal of equality makes for more human relationships amongst men, and for greater individual self-respect, it may only be said that an equality-loving people is better fitted for the gospel than a people wanting in those qualities’.²⁵⁴ The Catholic writers were not concerned, as was Headlam’s Guild of St Matthew, with urging on their fellow churchmen the duty to abolish ‘false standards of worth and dignity’.²⁵⁵ The social hierarchy in general was defended. In ‘On Some Reasons for not Despairing of a National Return to the Faith’, Dr Patterson spoke of the potential,

‘... ruin and wreck of our institutions, where the Christian character of the State, nay, even the basis of natural religion is compromised, and by a necessary consequence the national establishment of religion, the privileged classes, the landed proprietary, and hereditary rights, including the Crown and its succession, are piece-meal destroyed’.²⁵⁶

On other specific institutions of the social system, such as the London season, the journals were almost silent, and there are no attacks on the ‘idle rich’. Not the least controversial aspect of Dr Barry’s speech to the Catholic Conference of 1890, and his ensuing letters to the *Tablet* on the same question, was his attack on this apparent unquestioning, blanket acceptance of the core values of contemporary Protestant society:

‘Do not most of us imagine the present system of society to be a form of Christian life, and do we not admire and envy those who hold the highest place in it? The great idol of the middle class is “respectability with its thousand gigs”. Can we say that we make it our concern to wage war against this British worship of money, idleness, dullness, and vulgar greed? I often think that only in the working class will be found those who can rise and rescue it’.²⁵⁷

These comments provoked an outraged response from Fr James Splaine SJ:

²⁵⁴ ‘The Conversion of Modern Democracy’, *Tablet*, 29/9/1900, p.499

²⁵⁵ Mayor, *op. cit.* p.193. Headlam, a curate in Bethnal Green, had founded the GSM in 1875. Never numbering more than about 250 members, it was nevertheless influential in spreading knowledge about social ideas and conditions among the Anglican clergy. Headlam was on the left of the Christian Socialist movement, being for some years a member of the Fabian Society, and instrumental in welcoming Henry George to England.

²⁵⁶ ‘On Some Reasons for not Despairing of a National Return to the Faith’, *Dublin*, July 1881, p.219. Dr James Patterson of Westminster (Bishop of Emmaus) was commenting on the recent election to Parliament of the secularist Charles Bradlaugh, who demanded to be exempted from taking the oath of allegiance.

²⁵⁷ ‘Christianity and the Masses’, *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, pp.68-69

‘The case seems almost desperate, but lo, a ray of hope. “I often think,” muses the Doctor, “I often think that only in the working-classes will be found those that can rise and rescue it”. Oh, happy thought! Let the “proletariat”, the heathen mechanic and the heathen labourer, civilize themselves. If simplicity is an invention which shows genius, here surely is genius full blown’.²⁵⁸

Despite the opportunity so clearly recognised by Cardinal Manning and Dr Barry, the first clear admission that the Catholic Church might have been slow to grasp the potential of the working-classes did not appear until the very end of this era. In a paper on ‘The Conversion of Modern Democracy’, read at the Franciscan Tertiary Congress at Rome and printed in the *Tablet*, Fr Cuthbert OSFC commented:

‘I make bold to say that if religion at the present time has lost its hold on the mass of the people, it is because it has not made a sufficient demand upon the best qualities of the modern age, and has become too exclusively the refuge of the weak. Modern democracy, if appealed to in the right way, is capable of yielding a spiritual harvest equal to any yet gathered into the storehouse of Catholicism ...’.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ *Tablet*, 19/7/1890, p.102

²⁵⁹ *Tablet*, 29/9/1900, p.498

Chapter 4

The 'Reasonable and the Practicable': attitudes to self-help, co-operation and trades unionism

Socialism being perceived as the most pressing threat to religion and the stability of society at home and abroad, it was therefore the aspect of the 'problem of the poor' to which the Catholic press gave, by far, the most attention. In the words of the *Civiltà Cattolica* (reviewed in the *Month*), the question of how to combat the rise of Socialism was 'the question of the day, the problem which is gradually engaging all other interests, and on the solution of which the future of Europe greatly depends'.²⁶⁰ The various working-class movements or middle-class attempts to improve conditions for the poor received far less coverage; but even from this limited discussion a considerable degree of consensus emerged. For the Catholic writers, the ideal movement was directly inspired, and led, by religion. This, however, was a criterion rarely met in England and very rarely indeed amongst Catholic movements, although the writers could point to a comparative wealth of examples on the continent. The 'next best' in Catholic eyes were the efforts of the poor towards self-help, while 'next best' again were the paternalistic schemes with which the more enlightened large employers were then experimenting. In any case, efforts had to be apolitical and strictly limited in their aims. If they had a social as well as economic element, and could be likened to the guilds or other medieval precedent, then so much the better.

The *Month* remarked, in a review of *Profit-Sharing between Capital and Labour*, that it behoved Catholics to show that they 'above all others' were interested 'in all reasonable and practicable schemes for the improvement of the material welfare as well as of the moral and religious well-being of the labouring classes'.²⁶¹ 'Reasonable and practicable' were here, as very often, synonyms for 'neither Socialistic nor excessively democratic'. Temperance, the first and simplest measure of working-class self-help, had long been advocated, and there were many Catholic temperance societies, as well as Cardinal Manning's League of the Cross, the object of some disapproval for its unashamed borrowing of Salvation Army methods and of some ridicule (not least from the *Tablet*)

²⁶⁰ *Month*, June 1890, p.303

²⁶¹ Review of Sedley Taylor's *Profit-Sharing between Capital and Labour* (1884), *Month*, May 1884, p.131

because it exhorted total abstinence rather than temperance. There can be traced, however, a definite shift in emphasis on the temperance question: while it remained a pre-requisite for working-class solvency, there rose a wider understanding that insobriety could be as much the result as the cause of poverty. This was a gradual process: as Miss Streeter observed in the *Month*, in 1895 there was still a large group of 'well-meaning people' to whom the 'East End question' was still synonymous with the 'drink question' and she judged this opinion to be 'especially rife among Catholics'.²⁶² Yet the chief burden of blame did come to be shifted from the poor themselves to the brewers and landlords who exploited them. The 1891 Encyclical on labour, *Rerum novarum*, while placing traditional emphasis on thrift and sobriety, made not one direct reference to temperance.

The penny banks and similar encouragements to thrift were approved. The *Downside*, in a review of 'The Poor Law and Industrial Insurance', after first making the inevitable observation that the workhouse was the only substitute modern philanthropy had been able to devise for the part once played by the guilds and religious houses, went on to extol the opportunities 'now so readily available' for insurances and self help among the lower orders.²⁶³ In this area the Catholic writers strayed into one of the most consistent and serious flaws in their treatment of the 'problem of the poor': the failure to differentiate between the 'artisans' of whom they wrote so much - those enjoying comparatively high wages and secure employment - and the massive pool of semi-skilled or unskilled labourers who, even when in employment were, as W.F. Butler put it in *Merry England*, 'removed from starvation by the duration of one day's health'.²⁶⁴ The former could afford to put money by in insurance or savings; the latter could not. As so often, this distinction is not made, and mentions of the long-term unemployed and the chronically sick were conspicuous by their absence. In a short story for *Merry England*, 'From Baldwin's Buildings', K. Douglas King described a woman employed in the 'sweated' clothing industry while her husband worked 'up to his waist in mud and water for 20 years in the Docks'. He is compared with an acquaintance called Dutch Jan, a cabinet maker, who scorned strikes, and who had 'a shameless habit of glorying in his home, and wife, and child, that no outside mockery could eradicate'.²⁶⁵ The comparison between the occupation

²⁶² 'The East End', *Month*, February 1895, p.202

²⁶³ Review of Edmund F Taunton's 'The Poor Law and Industrial Insurance' (1883), *Downside*, January 1883, p.77.

²⁶⁴ 'The Invasion of England', p.52

²⁶⁵ 'From Baldwin's Buildings', *Merry England*, January 1894, p.218

of a docker, who worked in one of the most insecure and poorly paid forms of employment, and a cabinet-maker (even of the lower gradation) was meaningless. This writer, for one, had clearly learnt nothing from the details of working life at the docks revealed by the 1889 strike. The fundamental error of writing as though the working-class consisted - or ideally could consist - entirely of skilled 'artisans', side-stepping the fact that the *status quo* depended on a large pool of unskilled labour, was one into which all the best-known Catholic writers on the social question fell. Thus Cardinal Vaughan, among many others, placed great emphasis on technical education; which, while it might raise some Catholic workers from the unskilled to the skilled ranks of labour (as a speaker suggested to the conference of Catholics Young Men's Societies in 1893),²⁶⁶ could hardly do so for them all. Even Devas, more careful than most, did not always avoid this trap. Yet at the same time the artisans - idealised as sober, hard-working and happy to know and keep in their place - were clearly in Catholic minds very distinct from the rest of the working-classes. In his speech on 'Christianity and the Masses' to the 1890 Catholic Conference, Dr Barry described the working-class as consisting of

'artizans, unskilled workers, and the "residuum", as we may see Mr Charles Booth's admirable map of East London poverty. But I will venture to give them a name which brings out with force and accuracy the one mark which distinguishes them as a class. They are the "urban proletariat"'.²⁶⁷

Fr Splaine SJ responded immediately, in a letter to the *Tablet*, expressing his strong resentment of Dr Barry's use of the term 'the proletariat' to include both artisans and mechanics.²⁶⁸

It was as though the Catholic writers had found so convenient a model in the medieval guilds that the fact that the very poor were drawn from the unskilled labouring classes could simply be ignored. They tended to ignore other drawbacks of the guilds too - such as the arbitrary nature of some guild decisions, and their tendency to monopoly - but this was the most serious omission.²⁶⁹ In all the many discourses on the economic and social merits

²⁶⁶ Reported in the *Tablet*, 12/8/1893, p.262

²⁶⁷ 'Christianity and the Masses', pp.68-69

²⁶⁸ *Tablet*, 19/7/1890, p.102

²⁶⁹ As Ader, for example, has shown, the 'Guild Socialists' of the early twentieth century also tended to idealise the medieval guilds; they did, however, perceive the need for 'industry' rather than 'craft' guilds. (Emile B. Ader, *Socialism*, 1966, pp 69-71).

of the medieval guilds the first clear and downright admission that these had no relevance to the case of the unskilled labourer came, from Fr Gasquet, as late as July 1898:

‘The middle ages had no knowledge of any class of what I may call permanent wage-labourers. There was no working-class in our modern sense: and by that I mean a class the greater portion of which never rises ... If we desire to institute a comparison between the status of the working-classes in the 14th century and to-day, the comparison must be between the workman we know and the old master craftsman’.²⁷⁰

The failure to draw the fundamental distinction between the skilled and the unskilled and semi-skilled labourers was part of a wider failure to grasp the complex gradations within the working-classes of this period. Even though forty years had passed since Henry Mayhew had shown the complex degrees of status within the working-classes (and that the distinction between skilled and unskilled was the sharpest distinction of all), and the writers were working in an era of detailed and painstaking research into the lives of the poor, careful distinctions were so rare as to be remarkable and where they were made at all, it was usually by a social worker at ‘the coal face’. Henry D. Harrod, for example, in his articles for the *Dublin Review* and the *Month* on the housing of the poor, pointed out that the Peabody buildings could be afforded only by those earning 23s or more per week, and that slum-clearing to build such ‘artisans dwellings’ displaced the poor from the existing rookeries, obliging them to pack themselves still more tightly into those remaining. Harrod was a lay social worker, an active supporter of the Catholic Working-Men’s Societies, and took an especial interest in housing of the poor, contributing several important articles on the subject to the Catholic journals.²⁷¹ Yet even Harrod could express support for the idea put forward by Lord Salisbury and others to move workers out to better accommodation in the suburbs without pointing out that the costs even of ‘workmens tickets’ would be prohibitive for some; nor did he discuss the disadvantages which could lie in a family moving away from a district where they were well known and in which friends and neighbours might provide a network of informal support. Indeed, the Catholic writers seem on the whole to have had no understanding or awareness of neighbourly or community feeling among the very poor: the issue was simply not discussed.

²⁷⁰ ‘Guild Life’, p.105

Ada Streeter, a prominent worker with the Catholic Social Union, attempted - unusually among Catholic writers - to categorise the various types of poverty and unemployment: but the majority of Catholic writers did not even establish whether, when they wrote of 'the poor' or 'the lower orders' they referred to the chronically sick or the destitute, or to the degrees of 'ordinary' working-classes who, however hard-pressed, were neither. Similarly, 'pauperism' was used in both its 'proper' sense - to imply those dependent on relief - and in the vaguer sense, implying extreme poverty. Devas differentiated between poverty and extreme indigence without attempting to define them. While there was clearly a difference in the writers' minds between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' extents and degrees of poverty, no attempt was made to establish what these might be (the inevitable preference for rural poverty excepted). These were glaring omissions even for their day; they were doubly serious when made by a group of writers who consistently maintained that as 'the poor ye shall have always with ye', the existence of poverty to some degree must be natural, inevitable, and right.

(ii)

In addition to the concerns about the power of State inevitable among Catholics witnessing political events on the Continent and developments in secular education at home, the Catholic writers shared the doubts of their contemporaries about the potential for decreasing working-class self-reliance and increasing 'pauperisation' by the provision of penny dinners in schools, old-age pensions, and the like. The concerns over 'The Cheap Dinner Movement at Wolverhampton', reported in the *Tablet*, were typical: would not those parents who struggled to pay for their children's food give up their efforts if they found that their neighbours' children were being fed for free? Such well-meaning efforts could militate disastrously against self-reliance amongst the poor.²⁷² If government - at local or national level - had a role to play in solving 'the problem of the poor', it was that summed up by W. Roberts in 'The Social Distress': '... the duty of the Government [is] to foster an industrious spirit among the poor, for as far as it succeeds in doing that will distress be diminished, and the wealth of the country - which means, of course, individual

²⁷¹ Including 'The Homes of the Poor' (*Month*, September 1883); 'The Dwellings of the Poor', (*Month*, April 1884); and 'The Royal Commission and the Homes of the Poor', (*Dublin*, two parts, July and October 1885).

wealth - be increased'. He felt that the best results would be achieved through individual effort 'by the poor themselves'. His own list of the ways in which the Government could improve the lot of the poor 'without interfering too much with individual freedom' was fairly typical; it should ensure the provision of effective technical education, the development of the neglected resources of the land, and encourage emigration on a large scale to the colonies.²⁷³

The various profit-sharing schemes which were being tried or introduced by individual employers received a certain amount of coverage: especially, the work of the French Catholic, M. Leclaire, who had introduced one such system in his construction works as long ago as 1842. Devas, discussing profit-sharing schemes in 'Fair Wages', felt that they could sometimes be useful, even where they gave the workers a share not only of profits, but of management. Significantly, he felt that the chief benefit was to increase the workers' 'diligence and fidelity' and he pointed out that similar arrangements had worked successfully in very ancient times.²⁷⁴ Alice Corkran also emphasised this point, in 'Master and Man: A Possible Solution of the Labour Riddle' for *Merry England*. Advocating the adoption in England of Leclaire's system, she observed that he had introduced it because he had found that merely raising wages did not produce more 'zeal'. He wanted the men to put so much more 'heart' into their work that each produced an extra hour's worth of work a day. He also introduced a committee of the best workmen to judge the quality of work and rule on any cases of misconduct.²⁷⁵ Similarly, the *Month* of November 1896 reviewed 'A Key to Labour Problems', a pamphlet published by the Catholic Truth Society. This was based on the *Catéchisme du Patron*, the summary of the duties of a Catholic employer devised by M. Leon Harmel at his textile factories at Val-des-Bois, interpreted and slightly modified by Virginia Crawford. (Mrs Crawford also outlined M. Harmel's scheme, which involved the conferring of some of the management of the company on the workers, in the *Tablet* of 18/1/96 and 3/10/96). She described M. Harmel's enterprise as 'a veritable haven of industrial peace, where strikes are not, and where even trades-unions have no *raison d'être*'. He had created an 'industrial family' on a 'frankly Christian basis', where the employers maintained their 'rightful authority', the workers their 'rational liberty', and

²⁷² *Tablet*, 16/1/1886, p.110

²⁷³ 'The Social Distress', *Merry England*, February 1884, pp.276-278

²⁷⁴ 'Fair Wages', pp.503-504

²⁷⁵ 'Master and Man', *Merry England*, December 1883, p.83

class antagonism had been replaced by 'Christian charity and the love of justice'.²⁷⁶ M. Harmel's success had inspired similar schemes elsewhere, such as that of Herr Brandts of Monchen-Gladbach in Germany, described in a review of *Lessons from German Catholics* by the Reverend R Goldie in the *Month*.²⁷⁷ Henry D. Harrod, the best-known Catholic writer on the housing of the poor, was similarly enthusiastic (in 'The Royal Commission and the Homes of the Poor') about the 'Familistères', or communities of workmen, being established on the continent by some large employers. One such scheme existed, for example, at Guise, where in the works of M. Godin-Lemaire, over seven hundred workmen were housed, boarded and even clothed on partly or wholly co-operative principles.²⁷⁸ Devas remarked that the application of such schemes must always be confined to certain narrow limits, and that they were not the method by which the current 'discord between masters and workmen' was to be removed.²⁷⁹ The impression arising from the journals is that the writers tolerated and even approved of such schemes largely because they were thus limited in scope: there was nothing here likely to disturb the *status quo*.

The writers had to look to the Continent for examples of profit-sharing, paternalistic housing schemes and the like among Catholics because they did not exist at home. The immediacy of the threat from Socialism and anti-clericalism had meant that the Catholic Church on the continent had been impelled to organise itself in concerted and practical ways not seen in England. In Germany in 1884, to give just one example, the Catholic Centre party sided with the Conservatives and the National Liberals to bring in the Workmens Compulsory Assurance Act, against the combined opposition of the Liberalists, Popularists, and Social Democrats. Stone has described the clerical and Socialist parties as 'wall and flying buttress, for they were deadly rivals for the votes of the masses'.²⁸⁰ Thus in the early 1890s the Church was setting up not only such paternalistic efforts in France - usually run or instigated by priests - but also its own Catholic trade unions in Italy and Germany.

The Catholic clergy across the Continent were also involving themselves in the promotion of savings associations and co-operative societies, and occasionally, in more

²⁷⁶ 'A Key to Labour Problems', *Month*, November 1896, p.450

²⁷⁷ *Month*, May 1892.

²⁷⁸ *Dublin*, July 1885, pp.115-116

²⁷⁹ 'Fair Wages', p.504

²⁸⁰ Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed* (1999), p.62

comprehensive schemes like that organised by the Jesuit, Père van Langermeersch and run by laywomen among the factory girls at Brussels, the *Ligue des Femmes Chrétiennes*. The League aimed to protect the girls' Sunday rest, to increase their salaries, and to improve the sanitation in the workshops. Mrs Crawford described it, in 'Ideals of Charity' for the *Month*, as a 'Trade Corporation', very similar, to English trades-union on the economic side, but also combining certain features of the friendly societies, and run on a distinctly religious basis. The girls were encouraged to make use of the sick insurance societies known as *Mutualités*, and the League ran a co-operative drapery store, in which the women held shares; a women's club, open every Sunday; cooking and laundry classes, an employment bureau, and a system of free loans to shareholders in the co-operative society. The League owed its success, Mrs Crawford felt, to the fact that it was 'frankly, resolutely Catholic, pursuing, without faltering, an avowedly religious aim' with a 'system of short retreats and monthly reunions' furthering the spiritual side of the work. Here, she felt, was one way in which, 'the disaffected children of the Church' could 'be brought back to their allegiances'.²⁸¹

English Catholics would have to look abroad for both developments in thought and examples of practical initiatives on socio-economic questions for some time to come. This necessity had one advantage, as Devas rather ruefully admitted in 'The Unemployed'. Like looking back to the Middle Ages, it placed the potentially disruptive solutions to the problem at a comfortable distance:

'... as among our English writers so little has been done for our enlightenment, and we are likely to cry out at proposals that are reasonable and practicable, as though they were paradoxical or unfair, I prefer to approach the subject under the shelter of our brethren in Germany and in France ... ' .

He went on to cite some of the opinions formally promulgated by the Council of Studies of the *Oeuvre des cercles catholiques d'Ouvriers* in France.²⁸²

Co-operation, like profit-sharing, could be given a cautious welcome because it was unlikely to disturb the usual order. The mid-Victorian era had seen a great expansion in the Co-operative movement, but its original principles had been so far diluted that most co-operation was of sale rather than of production: associations shared profits among their

²⁸¹ 'Ideals of Charity', *Month*, May 1899, p.467

²⁸² 'How to Help the Unemployed', p.168

customers (the stores) not the workers themselves. Only a small minority pursued a more radical path, beginning to concern themselves with, for example, putting some of their profits into education. This minority, and Socialist onlookers, dismissed the main movement as 'divvy-hunting' but it was just the type of mild and limited self-help of which the Catholic writers could approve. An article in the *Tablet* on 'Land and the Labourers' was typical, advocating the use of allotments and limited co-operation.²⁸³ As the *Tablet* remarked tellingly of the Co-operative Congress at Oldham, '... the Movement is a good one, and we wish for it every success, and the avoidance of all dreams of pseudo-economists'.²⁸⁴ The *Tablet* quoted the remarks of the President of the Co-operative Union, Mr Vansittart Neale, at the 1888 Congress: he had said that co-operation, unlike Socialism, took into account human nature, and that workers, instead of aiming at a general revolution of society, should content themselves with establishing co-operation wherever practicable, and become capitalists themselves. The *Tablet* added, 'For Socialism of this kind we have no word but a good one, and so long as other people's property is not confiscated, the more working men there are who can become their own employers the better for the State'.²⁸⁵

After all, the medieval guilds could be said to have represented co-operation in its most acceptable form. E. M. Clerke, in 'Medieval Guilds and Modern Competition' (*Dublin*, July 1890), commented with satisfaction on the failure of the more ambitious forms of co-operation, which she saw as just another nostrum for ills which could only be cured by religion.²⁸⁶ Devas perceived the necessarily limited application of co-operation, although he acknowledged that his revitalised rural peasantry, in order to survive, would need to be 'associated for buying, associated for selling, associated for borrowing, associated for insurance'.²⁸⁷ The hopes of Fr Rickaby for co-operation, by contrast, were almost boundless, and his remarks on the subject (in 'Socialism and Religious Orders' for the *Month* of March 1898) reveal the extent to which the Catholic writers still demonstrated ignorance of the complexity and diversity of contemporary working life. Fr Rickaby felt that workmen, rather than 'impoverishing themselves by strikes', should start co-operative businesses and work these in competition with their masters. Thus they would secure for themselves part of the means of production and give themselves a way of putting pressure

²⁸³ *Tablet*, 19/3/1898, p.436

²⁸⁴ *Tablet*, 30/5/1885, p.840

²⁸⁵ *Tablet*, 26/5/1888, p.832

²⁸⁶ Ellen Mary Clerke, novelist, essayist and translator (sister of Agnes Clerke, the astronomer), contributed to various English and Italian periodicals.

on their 'masters' which, unlike striking, would not entail 'their own life-blood and means of subsistence ebbing away in the effort'.²⁸⁸ Passing over other objections to Fr Rickaby's plan - and he wrote at a time when, for example, boot-makers were campaigning for all-factory working in order to prevent the scattered out-workers from undercutting the unionised factory workers - he failed to recognise that for the majority it was simply not practicable. Co-operation was not an option for those dependent on large machinery, or to those employed as agricultural labourers, domestic servants, railway workers, and in a thousand-and-one other callings. Nor was this omission touched on by the *Tablet* in its favourable comments on Fr Rickaby's article.²⁸⁹

(iii)

In the 1880s trade unionism became more widely accepted by Catholics and by wider society in general. The unions at this time were confined almost entirely to the skilled workers or 'artisans' and represented a tiny minority of the occupied population: Callaghan has suggested that approximately 4% of the workforce were unionised in 1880.²⁹⁰ They were, in Hyndman's celebrated phrase, 'an aristocracy of labour', who guarded their privileges and did not concern themselves with issues of 'class struggle'. The spread of arbitration and boards of conciliation - which were approved by Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum* and were often likened by Catholics to medieval precedent - helped the acceptance process. Attitudes among Catholic writers were influenced by the awareness that repression of trades unions might leave the way clear for the repression of other forms of association, including those belonging to the Church. Writing on the 'The New Pontificate' in the *Dublin*, its editor, Fr Moyes, remarked that liberty of association was a priceless heritage which must be defended at all costs, for the sake both of society and of the Church - which was in herself an association.²⁹¹ Moreover, here Devas's influence on the Catholic debate was again considerable. That 'combinations' were as natural as individualistic competition was part of his 'groundwork'. He pointed to the long tradition of combinations among employers, arguing that if they could legitimately combine, their

²⁸⁷ "Catholic Socialism", *Dublin*, October 1895, p.124

²⁸⁸ 'Socialism and Religious Orders', *Month*, March 1898, p.289

²⁸⁹ *Tablet*, 5/3/1898, p.363

²⁹⁰ Callaghan, *op. cit.*, p.14

²⁹¹ *Dublin*, October 1903, p.258

employees must also be allowed to do so. In addition, he had realised quite early on (in, for example, 'The Unemployed', *Month*, May 1886) that trade unions, far from being inevitable breeding-grounds for Socialism, could serve to delay its advance by binding their members more closely into society.

Better yet, the 'old' Trades Unions with their defensive nature, their sick and burial clubs, and their emphasis on maintaining standards of work, could with some credibility be compared by Catholic writers with the medieval guilds. The *Tablet*, reviewing 'Trade Unionism New and Old', by George Howell MP, commented that:

'The healthiest and most promising features of modern Trade Unionism are traced back to those Christian and Conservative institutions, the Guilds of the Middle Ages ... those eminently Catholic creations initiated free associations, regulated industry, and laid the foundations for local government; whilst their decadence under the Tudors and the newer condition of things resulted in irksome restrictions upon capital and labours, and a paralysing centralization'.²⁹²

In the *Month*, W.D. Strappini, welcoming the inception of the *Labour Gazette*, a new publication from the Labour Department at the Board of Trade, argued that the trades unions offered a substitute - albeit a very poor substitute - for the protection once afforded to the workman by his lord and master. For this reason, he suggested, they were being seized on by those who knew themselves to be at the mercy of employers: 'As things are, he is bound to cling to his Union, as closely as ever feudal retainer clung to the lord who protected him against the oppression of every one, except his own. He endures the suppression of his individuality to escape what seem to him worse evils'.²⁹³ Nowhere among English working-class associations was there anything nearly as suited to the Catholic taste as the French *Oeuvre des cercles catholiques d'Ouvriers*. Not only was this inspired by the Catholic Church - in particular, by Leo XIII's writings on the social question - it drew its membership from across the social classes. Members of the clergy were amongst its numbers, while its lay members - as Devas pointed out - included, 'besides men of literature and politics ... a large and wholesome ballast of merchants, manufacturers, and men of property'.²⁹⁴

²⁹² *Tablet*, 11/2/1893, p.209

²⁹³ 'The *Labour Gazette*', *Month*, July 1893, p.329

²⁹⁴ 'How to Help the Unemployed', p.168

The arrival of 'new unionism' towards the end of the 1880s was far more problematic. The new unions were made up of unskilled and semi-skilled workers; their strikes soon began to be national and even international rather than local in scope. Rather than defending existing positions, they were aggressive, with strikers demanding better wages and shorter hours; and they were more concerned with their fighting funds than with the provision of 'sick' or 'friendly' benefits. Furthermore, they had ambitious ideas and concerned themselves with wider issues, just as the American 'Knights of Labor' campaigned for nationalisation of the railways and mines. Only a really determined self-deceiver could have likened the new-style unions to the medieval guilds. Moreover, on the face of it there was nothing here to benefit the employer. Thomas Canning commented in his 'The Labour Problem: Past and Present' that while the old unions had almost guaranteed the employer that he was getting a good workman, here there was no such guarantee. Canning concluded that:

'... The modern strikes have been generally successful, but not until they have inflicted loss on the capitalist, hardship on the strikers and their families, inconvenience upon the community, and filled the minds of all with a gloomy foreboding never experienced before, that if persisted in, this country will lose her commercial greatness, and subsequently her power ...' ²⁹⁵

'A strike', he felt, was:

'such a leakage of force, and consequently of wealth, that it is a *sacred obligation*²⁹⁶ upon all to seek some means of bringing striking to an end. Let a man strike but for one day, and that day's labour and consequent profit are lost for ever'.²⁹⁷

The *Month* reported the comments of Father Prélôt (in the May 1893 issue of *Études*), in which he acknowledged that Associations had been of immense value in the past and might continue to be so 'if not hampered by unjust restrictions or organised for ambitious designs'. Yet he deplored the fact that they were no longer instrumental in 'furthering social order and tranquillity, individual liberty and prosperity'.²⁹⁸ Abbot Snow seized on the 'internationalisation' of the labour question as another reason why only the Church, that most international of organisations, could be effective in promoting common actions amongst nations: '... she is Catholic, she is everywhere, she is bound to uphold the

²⁹⁵ 'Labour Problem', p.321

²⁹⁶ My italics.

²⁹⁷ 'Labour Problem', p.335

principles of justice, and she could adjudicate equitably between the demands of capitalists and workmen'.²⁹⁹ For Miss Streeter, for whom the chief cause of the problem of the poor was their own 'indiscipline', there was little doubt that on the workman 'of average ability and diligence ... the action of the Unions is distinctly salutary and advantageous, and the tyranny they exercise serves to promote the greatest benefit to the greatest number'.³⁰⁰

It is perhaps surprising that the Catholic writers were not more whole-heartedly and unanimously against the new-style unions. On this subject, as on the question of votes for women, the attitude of the *Tablet* is instructive. The *Tablet* believed firmly in the effectiveness of unionism, acknowledging that trade unionism had improved the lot of the unionised workers, serving to sharpen the contrast with the non-unionised and 'sweated' labourers. A leader of 22/9/1883 described the unions as the 'best defence of Lazarus against the spirit of the day which sought to wring from him the maximum of work for the minimum of remuneration'.³⁰¹ There was support for this view from the *Dublin Review*: in July 1891, for example, Henry Abraham argued in 'Trades Unionism Among Women in Ireland' that only organisation could help the sweated labourers in the clothes industry. By 1892 the *Tablet* saw the growing influence of the men's trade unions at Parliament as being used to defend themselves unfairly against competition from women's work, and by 1900, the journal was expressing surprise that waiters, for example, had not become unionised when the advantages of doing so had become so manifest.³⁰² (In fact 'New Unionism' was by no means generally successful throughout the 1890s: the vast majority of the workers did not belong to unions and the movement was still dominated by the skilled workers). Nevertheless, the *Tablet's* belief in the effectiveness of Trades Unionism made the journal concomitantly wary of its power. The *Tablet's* overt stance on the trade union movement was one of neutrality and it strove for most of the time to maintain this. Disliking strikes, while conceding their usefulness as a last resort, the *Tablet* seemed not to care how they ended as long as they did end as quickly as possible: the overall feeling was that strikes, which gave advantage to economic rivals overseas, were unpatriotic. Both picketing and closed shops were frowned on by the *Tablet* and by the other Catholic journals, while at this time the Reverend J. G. Adderley of the Christian Socialist Union was developing a

²⁹⁸ *Month*, May 1893, p.151

²⁹⁹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 28/12/1895, p.1034

³⁰⁰ 'On some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', p.159

³⁰¹ *Tablet*, 22/9/1883, pp.442-443

³⁰² *Tablet*, 18/8/1900, p.239

Christian defence of the 'closed shop', arguing that it was brotherly to recognise one's duty to those of one's own trade.³⁰³ here was one possible parallel with the medieval guilds which the Catholic writers preferred not to draw. The increase in strikes in which unions of unrelated trades joined was also regarded as an ominous development, and in April 1899 the *Tablet* expressed relief at the ruling that rate-payers might prosecute Guardians who paid poor-relief to striking workers.³⁰⁴

Cardinal Manning, in a commentary for the *Dublin* on the Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, remarked: 'A strike is like war. If for just cause a strike is a right inevitable, it is a healthy constraint imposed upon the despotism of capital. It is the only power in the hands of the working men'.³⁰⁵ Bishop Bagshawe, in his 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor', agreed that although strikes gave rise to their own misery, they were certainly a better defence than none against the often tyrannical power of wealth.³⁰⁶ The Cardinal and the Bishop here as elsewhere used language too blunt and powerful for the liking of the *Tablet*, but with allowances for the terminology, theirs was very much the *Tablet*'s own view, and indeed it was the position outlined by Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum*. Fr Rickaby commented:

'Leo XIII sees combination as working-man's defence, but he is not thinking of Trades Unions, as such institutions are organised now, but of institutions founded on the model of the ancient Guilds, the abolition of which he deplores at the opening of the Encyclical ... Without condemning the large employer, or plutocrat, who doubtless is a necessity of the times, His Holiness sighs for the rehabilitation of the small employer, and of guilds or fraternities of small employers along with their workpeople ... the future prosperity of the Church and of mankind is involved in the formation of these Trades Guilds on a Catholic basis'.³⁰⁷

Devas, summing up in 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', concluded that where Catholic associations were impracticable but trades unions and 'masters unions' existed and were neutral - that is to say, not dominated by men 'in revolt against justice and religion', then Catholics should participate in them so as 'to imbue them with the Christian spirit'.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Peter d'Alroy Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914* (1968), p.196

³⁰⁴ *Tablet*, 1/4/1899, p.480

³⁰⁵ 'Leo XIII on "The Condition of Labour"', *Dublin*, July 1891, p.163

³⁰⁶ Bishop Bagshawe 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor: The True Political Economy' (1885), p.17

³⁰⁷ 'A Commentary on the Encyclical Letter of May 15, 1891 on the Condition of the Working Classes', (hereafter, 'Commentary'), Parts 1 and 2 April-May 1898. Pt. II, *Month*, May 1898, pp.488-489

On the Continent experiments with such Catholic unions, or rather associations, were being made: Bishop Schmitz of Cologne, 'the People's Bishop', formed associations which divided the local Catholic workers into associations of men and women, apprentices and workmen, shopkeepers and farmers according to their calling. In England trades unions, in their current and un-Catholic form, continued to lie within an uneasy hinterland between the acceptable and unacceptable forms of working-class self-help. Trades unions and even strikes, while a very poor substitute for religious guilds, were often acknowledged to be better than the unchecked exploitation of the workers and the *Tablet* on occasion declared the employers to be at fault, where it felt their handling of the situation had been inept, provocative or in that usefully vague term, 'oppressive'. Fr Lehmkuhl, for example, observed in *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach* that strikes were justified 'only as a means of self-defence against oppression - when more moderate measure fail to effect'.³⁰⁹ Here was one of the many ambiguous phrases which plagued the Catholic debate on the social question. Who was to decide what constituted 'oppression'?

However pertinent his observations on the exclusive nature of the old trade unions or the isolation of co-operation from the other working-class movements, Devas failed (like many commentators) to give sufficient weight to the rise of working-class organisation *per se*: a fact of still more significance than whether they were choosing to organise themselves in trades unions or co-operative societies, in Mechanics' Institutes and Working-Men's Clubs, in temperance societies or in socialist societies, or the rest. Instead, like his fellow-Catholics, Devas emphasised the role of Socialism in stirring up feelings of cupidity and discontent amongst the poor, and the intensification of antagonism between the classes. He did not share the feeling, of (for example) Charles Booth, who perceived that 'Among working-men a kind of sublimated trade unionism is the most prevalent gospel; a vague bias towards that which is believed to be good for one's fellow men'.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', pt. two, *Dublin Review*, July 1902, pp.143-144

³⁰⁹ Reviewed in the *Month*, March 1890, p.453

³¹⁰ Quoted in Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London - A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (1984), p.339

Chapter 5

‘Verbal confusion’, Socialism and Social legislation: the Catholic debate on the acceptable limits of state intervention

The failure of the Catholic writers to establish the terms used in their discussions went so deep that entire reviews and essays were written about ‘the poor’ and ‘the labouring classes’ without any attempt being made to establish what was meant by those terms. Who were ‘the poor’? Were ‘the poor’ and the ‘working classes’ synonymous terms? Or were ‘the poor’ the (temporarily or permanently) unemployed? The old and the sick? The ‘widowed and orphaned’? Were those ‘ordinary’ labourers, in more or less constant employment on a low wage, included? This laxness of thought is exemplified by the habit into which the writers fell of referring to the ‘oppression of the weak by the strong’. This vague and convenient phrase was much in use generally, but most often in the context of the large employer - especially in the context of strikes, and in skirting round specific areas where legislation might clearly be indicated to protect the ‘weak’. Thus Devas, the great proponent of the paternal ideal of employer-employee relations, wrote:

‘It is shown to be the right and the duty of Government to maintain social order and protect the weaker against the stronger, for the working man is the weaker, nor can he appeal to the humanity of his employer in these days when the latter so frequently is not an individual but a company, not a man activated by right principle, but a machine urged on by active competition’.³¹¹

In addition to their vagueness, these remarks formed just one instance of Devas’s apparent awareness of the gap between his own ideal model for workplace relations and how matters really stood; an awareness which marched uncomfortably alongside his insistence that master-servant relations were fundamentally unchanged. Similarly, the writers often remarked that employers should give their workers what was due to them, without attempting to establish what this might be. In the *Dublin*, ‘JM’ (Fr Moyes, the Editor) concluded that there were elements in the contemporary social demands ‘which the Church is too reasonable and too pious a mother to meet with a *non possumus*. The Usurer, the Sweater, and the gambler in Stocks will find it a difficult work to shelter their ill-gotten gains behind the tomes of her moral theology’.³¹² In the *Month*, Fr H.W. Lucas remarked:

³¹¹ In a review of *Etudes*, *Month*, December 1888, p.600

³¹² ‘Notes on Social Science’, *Dublin*, April (check) 1893, p.447

‘I do not for a moment pretend to find salve for the conscience of any man who may have pocketed, not the “unearned increment” but the fruits of tenant-made improvements, who may in any way have traded on the necessities of his poor and helpless neighbour to exact from his tenant an exorbitant rent, or to withhold from his labourer such wages (in money or in kind) as may have sufficed to keep him in physical or moral well-being. Such persons may be left to apply to themselves the Church’s condemnation of the oppressive usurer with whom their case is parallel’.³¹³

Mentions of ‘usury’ are frequent, but discussions of the subject in its modern aspect, such as that in the *Tablet* (‘Usury’ 23/7/1887) and Fr Rickaby’s learned but vague article of the same title in the *Month* of September 1886, steered clear of specific examples. Similarly, the journals tended to focus on those figures who had been the stock villains of the piece for centuries - greedy employers, grasping landlords, and ‘usurers’ who lent money to the desperate at extortionate rates. This perspective was consistent with the belief, so widely and dearly held among the writers, in the unchanging nature of human relations and, fundamentally, the problem of the poor. Moreover such timeless targets of hatred or derision were largely uncontentious. It was ‘safer’ to attack the ‘sweated’ employers of small workshops, for example, than to examine the way in which large factory owners treated their employees, just as it was ‘safer’ to think in terms of occasional evil-doers and injustices than to examine the possibility of the entire economic system being ranged against the poor. The few exceptions to this rule were mostly to be found in *Merry England*. The best demonstration was in Richard Dowling’s allegorical story ‘A Night with the Unhanged’, which stands alone in the Roman Catholic journals in the period under discussion in its detailed and specific attacks on those who preyed on the poor; and in allying them unhesitatingly with those who argued on economic grounds against Government intervention in their defence. In Dowling’s story, Mr Sewing Death (an employer of ‘sweated’ labour), was the newest member of a club, the other members of which included Mr Crowner Squared, a coroner who hushed up occupationally related deaths amongst factory workers; Mr Sal Spurious, a seller of adulterated drugs to the poor; Septennial Smash, a usurer; Jerry Mason, a builder of shoddy housing; Le Chevalier Saveloy, seller of adulterated food; Mr Fleeing Welshman, a bookmaker; Mr Phusel Hoyle, seller of adulterated liquor; and Mr Dindered Slaughter, who built railways he knew to be unsafe, taking care to put the third-class passengers in the front carriages - the most dangerous place - because their bereaved relatives could be “bought off” more cheaply

³¹³ ‘National Prosperity and the Ownership of Land’, p.553

those of the first-class passengers. The club, presided over by Judge Roper, was the “Mutual Anti-Halter Club”, dedicated to the prevention of any measures or laws which might protect the poor from exploitation.³¹⁴ While sweated labour and ‘jerry-built’ housing are recurring themes in the Roman Catholic press throughout this period, the other injustices mentioned in ‘A Night with the Unhanged’ are rarely, if ever, touched on. There are echoes, however, elsewhere in *Merry England*: for example, in ‘The Story of a Penny Dinner’, in which ‘John Oldcastle’ (Wilfrid Meynell) observed that the poorest people had to pay most highly for the bare necessities, ‘as if the petty tradesman had taken to himself the mission of fulfilling that threat in the parable which tells us that from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath’.³¹⁵

When Leo XIII’s great Encyclical on the social question, *Rerum novarum*, was published in May 1891 many commentators were struck by his pronouncement that ‘Wages must be sufficient to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort.’ Fr Rickaby SJ remarked,

‘This utterance is the very cream of the whole Encyclical. This is the jewel to which the rest of the letter is the setting. It is one of the most momentous things that Leo XIII has ever said to the world; and, coming from such an authority, it is the weightiest sentence ever uttered in the controversy between Capital and Labour’.³¹⁶

The phrase ‘frugal comfort’ was seized upon by many Catholic writers; indeed, no phrase could have more closely embodied their own ideal for the condition of the working-classes. Yet, again, the phrase lacked definition. Fr Rickaby was exceptional in attempting to define it himself, in ‘Three Socialist Fallacies’. In his idea of ‘frugal comfort’, a workman ‘... has money over from his wages, without pinching himself, if he does not gamble, nor drink like a sot: he can put that money in a savings-bank, and marry on it ere long’.³¹⁷ Even this personal definition is vague; what degree of deprivation is implied by ‘pinching’? The subjective nature of the phrase ‘frugal comfort’ was illustrated by the lengthy debate which ensued on whether or not wages should, in order to be ‘just’, be sufficient to support a workman alone, or his family too, in ‘frugal comfort’.

³¹⁴ ‘A Night with the Unhanged’, *Merry England*, September 1883.

³¹⁵ ‘The Story of a Penny Dinner’, p.72

³¹⁶ ‘Commentary’ Pt II, p.483

³¹⁷ ‘Three Socialist Fallacies’, *Month*, February 1898, p.151

It is noticeable that where the writers issued vague threats against ‘oppressive’ action by the members of the ruling classes, then these threats tended to be of riot and revolution if the working-class were pushed beyond the lengths of its endurance, and of vague condemnation of the ‘oppressors’ in the here and now, rather than on punishment they might face in the hereafter. When discussing the deep divisions which lay between the rich and the poor, the parable of Dives and Lazarus was mentioned again and again; but as an oblique, rather than a personalised or pointed warning. In the Biblical story Dives, the wealthy merchant, is condemned to eternal hell-fire as a result of his neglect of Lazarus, starving at his gate; but the writers did not go on to draw direct comparison between the wealthy and the poor of their own times. The degree of emphasis on personal sin to be found within Nonconformity would not, of course, be expected in the Catholic journals. Nevertheless, the idea that individual readers might be prompted to examine their own consciences - and all middle or upper-class Catholics were employers, if only of domestic servants - was conspicuous by its absence. Mentions of the part that might be being played by the average Catholic - or indeed, the average individual - in perpetuating injustice or exploiting the poor were so rare that the exceptions - such as in W. D. Strappini’s ‘The Labour Gazette’ are remarkable.³¹⁸ In an anonymous review of Bishop Bagshawe’s ‘Mercy and Justice to the Poor’ in the *Month* the reviewer acknowledged that:

‘The condition of the working classes in the thickly populated countries of modern Europe is a subject which it is impossible for any lover of his kind to contemplate without a mixed feeling of indignation, sorrow, apprehension, and dismay ... that this misery might have been prevented is as equally undeniable; that the causes which produced it are still at work in full force and vigour, without any sufficient attempt to check or prevent them, must we fear be confessed by all who have studied the subject ...’³¹⁹

Yet he went on to plead that the problem was so complicated as to be almost insoluble. Neither industrialists nor ‘inheritors of vast estates’ could be blamed, because,

‘Many a thoroughly kind-hearted, benevolent, and conscientious man altogether neglects, as far as personal supervision goes, his estates in the country or his property in some crowded district in a large city without a qualm of conscience, partly because he is never brought face to face with the misery that exists there, but

³¹⁸ ‘The Labour Gazette’, *Month*, July 1893.

³¹⁹ *Month*, April 1885, p.582

believes the assurances of his man of business that everything is going on there most happily and satisfactorily'.³²⁰

Neither Manning nor Devas would have found this acceptable. Both acknowledged that such ignorance of how the poor lived still existed, and both felt that it was inexcusable in Catholics. They felt that it was the Christian duty of employers to know, and to feel responsible for, the way in which their employees or tenants lived.

The reviewer of 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor' went on to plead in mitigation the 'many countervailing advantages which the poor enjoy' which he felt Bishop Bagshawe had overlooked, such as the cheapness of foodstuffs and other necessities in London; the very competition which the Bishop deplored had 'secured cheap bread and meat brought from every corner of the earth'.³²¹ Most Catholic writers by this time were better informed than this. Devas, writing in the same journal a year later (May 1886) on 'The Unemployed', was rather more realistic: 'The distress ... is aggravated by the horrible adulteration of food - of bread, flour, oatmeal, sugar, milk, beer, and tea - that is little checked in the East of London'.³²² Yet the other mistakes made by the anonymous reviewer of 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor' - such as writing as though workmen's trains and model lodging-houses were an option available to the poorest classes - were not uncommon.

In the middle of a strong worded essay on the exploitation of workers by tyrannical employers, Devas himself broke off to remark:

'But let me not be misunderstood. I am not presuming to lay down rules for individual consciences, but I am only stating the principles that in all healthy societies ought to be followed in settling the relations between masters and servants ... questions of conscience are not like the general questions of social science, and belong to a particular field into which I have no intention of entering ... Individuals may be excused, may be held free from the least reproach; but our society and its principles cannot be excused'.³²³

Similarly, in 'What to do With the Landowners' he reassured his readers that he was 'not presuming to trespass on the domain of moral theology, still less to condemn any individual', but only to state 'the general and normal relations which should exist between

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.584

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p.584

³²² 'The Unemployed', p.3

landowners and their dependants'.³²⁴ Such remarks were effectively a denial both of Devas's own argument that political science was necessarily a question of ethics and of the Manningite position that the condition of the poor was of such central importance to every Christian that for society to put economic considerations before their welfare was 'atheism in fact and deed'.³²⁵

Nor did the writers ever consider the most challenging question of whether, if an employer paid the 'going rate' in wages for his area and industry, and that wage was insufficient to support a healthy existence, he was then an 'oppressor' - or merely, with his employees, a fellow-victim of the capitalist system. Those writers brave enough to tackle the most unappealing aspects of capitalism sometimes revealed an almost extraordinary mixture of knowledge and naivety. Approaching the issue in 'Medieval Guilds and Modern Competition', E.M. Clerke saw the plight of the working-classes as the result simply of over-competition in the labour market. Demonstrating her awareness of the recent findings of the Royal Commission on 'Sweating', she explained that the 'sweater' was usually the 'helpless product of circumstances and surroundings' rather than the wealthy ogre of legend. As she observed:

'This conclusion, by removing responsibility from the individual to the impersonal abstraction of economic law, renders a remedy all the more difficult to seek. It is the grinding pressure of international competition which leaves no practical alternative between the extinction of a trade at a cost of still greater suffering, and its pursuance under the present terrible conditions'.

This neatly removed the burden of guilt from the exploitative employer; but Miss Clerke did not go on to explore where a more collective responsibility might lie. Moreover, she depicted those employers not ranked among the 'sweaters' in an unrealistically flattering light:

'Sweating exists in the absence of a responsible employer, whose wealth and standing would place him in a position of accountability for the welfare of those in his employ ... the 'bloated capitalist', whose prosperity is generally distributed in pretty fair proportion among the grades below him'.³²⁶

³²³ 'Fair Wages', p.517.

³²⁴ 'Landowners', p.249

³²⁵ Cardinal Manning to W.S. Lilly on the publication of *Shibboleths*. Quoted in 'Shibboleths: Mr Lilly's Book on Politics', p.437

³²⁶ 'Medieval Guilds and Modern Competition', *Dublin*, p.159

The Catholic writers on the whole were less complimentary than Miss Clerke to the large employers. The large factory enterprise was the example of economic life usually focused on in discussions of the social question: indeed the discussions often read as though the writers supposed all those poor who did not work on the land necessarily worked in large factories, and that all oppressive or exploitative employers were necessarily large factory owners. As few of the comparatively small number of English Catholics belonged to the entrepreneurial or commercial middle-classes and they were almost unrepresented in the journals, this was at once the model of which they knew least and with which they themselves could least be identified. Nor did concentration on this model accurately reflect the economic reality. (As Callaghan has shown, not more than one in six members of the adult labour force in the 1880s were involved in factory production and even this number was prone to seasonal fluctuation).³²⁷ The concentration on this one aspect served to distance the Catholic writers from the direct application of their own debate; an examination of residential landlords, rural land-owners, or indeed employers of domestic labour, might have brought the subject both literally and figuratively closer to home. They chose to ignore Ruskin's observation (in *Unto this Last*) that 'We shall find the best and simplest illustration of the relations of master and operative in the position of domestic servants'.³²⁸ This reliance on the large factory model of economic enterprise fitted in well with the Catholic ideal of a rural 'merrie England' before the Reformation and their dislike of the industrialisation which had made necessary huge factories and immense and crowded towns - although it certainly did not tally with the other Catholic habit of writing as though all workers were, or could be, 'artisans'. However, by this concentration on the working conditions of the urban industrial workers - which could be radically improved by pieces of piecemeal legislation (and to an extent already had been, by various Factory Acts) - the Catholic writers could avoid engaging with the wider issues of a *status quo* dependent on the exploitation of one class by another. It is also one of several important inconsistencies on the social question that those Catholic writers who (unlike Devas) felt obliged to defend the rich against charges of idleness, usually pointed to the factory-owning 'captain of industry' figure as a generator of wealth for all.

³²⁷ Callaghan, *op. cit.*, p.13

³²⁸ Ruskin, *op. cit.*, p.169

The over-reliance on the factory enterprise as an economic model was one example of the narrowness of the Catholic debate: here the depth rather than the width of the problem was discussed. With the wider social reporting and 'scientific' social investigations, more was becoming known at this time about the specific damage done to the working-classes by many of their various occupations. George Moore attacked the wet-nursing system and the general exploitation of the servant class in *Esther Walters* (1894), one of the best-sellers of the decade. In Richard Whiteing's *No 5, John Street*, the wealthy narrator determines to try for himself life among the working classes. Having managed to secure for himself regular work paying at least enough for the necessities of life, he begins to feel almost complacent, when, in the novel's pivotal moment, he realises that the materials and processes used at the factory where he works are poisoning the workforce. Although Britten reviewed *No 5, John Street* for the *Month* of October 1899, and the *Tablet* printed a lengthy review of the novel³²⁹ and also printed factual reports of recent similar instances immediately before and after this review (for example, on lead-poisoning in the potteries),³³⁰ the journals continued to avoid discussion of these issues. It is tempting to speculate that *Merry England* might have covered these topics if the journal had survived beyond early 1895. The narrowness of the Catholic debate reflected the writers' deep and essential conservatism. By refusing to embrace the wider debate on the nature of modern industrial capitalism they could continue to argue that all that were needed - apart perhaps from minor legislative adjustments to the *status quo* - were a more merciful and charitable spirit on the part of the rich and more thrift and self-discipline on the part of the poor.

(ii)

If the writers failed to define what was meant by 'poverty' and its acceptable and unacceptable levels and degrees, or when a class ceased to be merely poor and became 'pauperised', still less did they arrive at a satisfactory consensus on what constituted 'Socialism' (and therefore, what distinguished it from 'Collectivism', 'Communism' and so on). Thus the *Tablet*, reviewing the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the subject of 'The Social Question', observed:

³²⁹ *Tablet*, 25/03/1899, pp.457-458

³³⁰ *Tablet*, 1/4/1899, p.479

‘Prudent progress in the direction of Socialism is wise, but it may become most mischievous unless it is rigidly restrained by securities against an intolerable interference with individual liberty ... a quarter of a century ago - nay ten years ago - no first-class newspaper would have dared to write this ... Is it possible, an old-world politician may ask, to propound a more dangerous proposition? Yes, indeed, it is possible. Far more dangerous is it to refuse to recognise facts ... the social question is the question of the day’.³³¹

Here the *Tablet* was clearly using ‘Socialism’ to signify social legislation aimed at amelioration of the conditions of the working-classes. The depth of confusion is further revealed by an article on ‘Socialism in Practice’ in the same journal two years later. Reporting on an arson and theft carried out by an Anarchist, the *Tablet* made no attempt to differentiate between Socialism and Anarchism.³³² A considerable degree of confusion persisted into the 1890s, despite a general increase in the understanding of Socialism among the best-known writers on the social question. It was by now widely acknowledged that the leaders of English Socialism, rather than sharing the passionate anti-clericalism which often characterised continental Socialism, represented a wide spectrum of belief and unbelief. (An anonymous reviewer in the *Tablet* in 1898 remarked that in England the Socialists probably included ‘as large a proportion of good Christians as any other party, and Catholics have no particular cause of quarrel with them’: few Catholic commentators would have gone this far).³³³ While there was some relaxation of the conventional stance of uncompromising and unreasoned hostility to Socialism, English Catholics always had in mind the intensely material nature of Socialism as they saw it, with its emphasis on the ‘here and now’, and the many instances abroad in which the growth in intervention by a central state had worked against the interest of the Church. There was some realisation, too, that Socialism had its various forms: Fr Rickaby spoke in 1898 of ‘the gentler form of Socialism now coming into vogue’,³³⁴ and in the same year pointed out the need ‘for reminding Socialists, that the question between them and their opponents is, not whether certain enterprises are not better left in State hands, or in municipal hands, but whether all private enterprise is to be forbidden’.³³⁵ Some writers had a cautious welcome for the least revolutionary Socialism but most saw it as the old Socialism in a more invidious guise. Devas was in no doubt that the newer Socialism, of the type then taking hold in Germany - ‘State Socialism’, or in the term which he and Cardinal Manning both preferred,

³³¹ *Tablet*, 10/1/1885, p.42

³³² *Tablet*, 22/1/1887, p.141

³³³ *Tablet*, 17/12/1898, p.970

³³⁴ ‘Commentary’, Pt. 1, p.371

‘Caesarism’ - was in fact more rather than less dangerous than the old. This was also the view of the anonymous writer on ‘Socialism and Liberty’ for the *Month* of May 1885. Admitting that the word Socialist had taken on ‘a Protean vagueness’ of meaning, the writer commented that while the late Karl Marx and his followers stated boldly that the idea of heaven must be got rid of, the English socialists with their concentration on the organisation of material happiness, had practically if not so explicitly, the same aim: it was ‘paganism, pure and simple, even though there is no word of outrage uttered against Christianity’.³³⁶ It is significant that in 1892 Devas still needed to look to the continent for, as he remarked, a ‘careful and detailed confutation’ of the newer Socialism, which he saw as the more dangerous because it was more ‘practicable’: he found it in Fr Cathrein’s *Le Socialisme, ses principes fondamentaux et son impossibilité pratique*, which he reviewed for the *Month* of May 1892.³³⁷

The continuing confusion over terms, by no means confined to Roman Catholics, was compounded by the existence of a ‘Christian Socialist’ movement many of whose leaders, however radical in their different ways, were far from being Socialists. When the Christian Socialists spoke or wrote of ‘Socialism’ they could mean anything from outright nationalisation of all resources by the State, to a mild measure of municipal control; while the Fabians deliberately blurred the distinctions between the various types of Socialism for tactical purposes. That Catholics were also confused over definitions was not surprising. Confusion over what constituted ‘Socialism’, always inimical to constructive debate, became disastrous if it meant that Catholics fell into the trap of regarding all departures from *laissez faire* as ‘socialistic’ and as a result, allied themselves irrevocably with those individualists implacably wedded to the *status quo*. This Devas described as a ‘fundamental and irremediable’ error, one against which he consistently warned his readers. In one of his occasional reviews for the *Dublin* of the *American Political Science Quarterly*, he wrote that such people were:

‘... depriving us hopelessly of any criterion of what is the right function of the State and the right limits of social legislation. Take no food, sir, I might reply, for each mouthful is progress towards over-eating. There are a certain number of persons, intelligent but greatly misinformed, who think that all legislation

³³⁵ ‘Three Socialist Fallacies’, p.163

³³⁶ ‘Socialism and Liberty’, *Month*, May 1885, p.17

³³⁷ Review of *Le Socialisme, ses principes fondamentaux et son impossibilité pratique*, *Month*, May 1892, p.138

protective of the poorer and weaker members of the State is socialistic. To make such persons understand that they are themselves most effective though unwilling promoters of socialism is difficult ...'.³³⁸

Those who had experienced the beneficial effects of the Factory Acts, for example, might - on hearing them denounced as 'Socialistic' - then decide to call themselves Socialists: 'For they know no mean; they steer vigorously away from the anarchical Charybdis of Individualism, but only to be caught by the claws of the Socialistic Scylla'.³³⁹

The *Tablet* had made the same point in its review of *Contemporary Socialism* by John Rae; indeed, the review may well have been by Devas. (Rae himself might be said to have added somewhat to the confusion over terms, in that he argued that only certain Socialists - including the followers of Marx - were demanding 'social justice', while the rest, including the Christian Socialists, wanted only 'social improvement').³⁴⁰ Devas also warned against the other extreme: those like Signor Nitti, Professor of Political Economy at Naples, for example, who felt that Socialism - in any of its variations - was 'nothing else than the doctrine opposed to Individualism'. Of this remark Devas commented: 'Now individualism being the principle, "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," we, as Catholics, under this system of nomenclature, must all be hearty Socialists'. Devas made these remarks in his review of Professor Nitti's *Il Socialismo Cattolico* in the *Dublin Review*.³⁴¹ Professor Nitti's book was calculated to exasperate not only Devas and other fellow-Catholics writing in his field but also Socialists, in that throughout his book all movements towards social reform were classed as 'Socialism'. He wrote, for example, that 'Cardinal Manning had long before [the Dock Strike of 1889] fully arrived at the conclusions of Socialism'. (Professor Nitti also alienated Devas and others by denouncing Catholic charities and recommending that poor relief should become the business of the State). In the same review, Devas commented that at the Catholic Conference of 1893, Cardinal Vaughan had quoted with approval Cardinal Manning's own definition of Socialism, made in his commentary on *Rerum novarum* for the *Dublin Review*:

'The terms Socialism and Socialistic have an essentially ill signification. Socialism is to society what rationalism is to reasoning. It denotes an abuse, an excess, a de-

³³⁸ "Shibboleths": Mr Lilly's Book on Politics', p.437

³³⁹ 'Olive Branch', p.327

³⁴⁰ Published 1884; reviewed in the *Tablet*, 4/10/1884, pp.530-531

³⁴¹ "Catholic Socialism", p.119

ordination in human society, as rationalism denotes a misuse and an abuse of reason. All reasoning must be rational that is in conformity with the laws of reason, and all legislation for human society must be both human and social by the necessity and nature of mankind. Inhuman and anti-social law is not law, but tyranny or anarchy. It implies therefore a laxity of thought, or at least of terminology, to speak of Christian Socialism or of Catholic Socialism. The Holy Father is too keen in his apprehension, and too exact in his reasoning to admit such confusion even in terms'.³⁴²

Although Devas was reviewing the 1895 edition, Professor Nitti's book had been written just before the issue of *Rerum novarum* and only this fact, Devas remarked - in another demonstration of his confidence in the force of the Encyclical - could excuse Professor Nitti's confusion and his use of the term 'Catholic Socialism'.

The English socialists consistently claimed that the Roman Catholics did not understand Socialism and its aims. As Devas remarked, before the issue of *Rerum novarum* Socialists had 'flattered themselves' that the Pope misunderstood them, because in his first Encyclical (*Quod apostolici*, 1878) he had bracketed them with Communists and Nihilists. Devas felt that *Rerum novarum* had so far clarified matters that Socialists could no longer claim to be misunderstood.³⁴³ In fact they did continue to claim just that; indeed it was one of their three main responses to *Rerum novarum*, as Doyle has shown;³⁴⁴ the others being that Leo XIII's views on private property were irrelevant and erroneous, and an emphasis on the gulf between the contemporary practice of Christianity, and that preached by Jesus. On one particular point at least, the Socialists were to some degree justified in feeling themselves to be consistently and obdurately misrepresented by Catholics. The Catholic writers accused the Socialists of trying to achieve, not merely amelioration of the working-class lot, but an impossibly utopian state of affairs - in the phrase borrowed from William Morris, an 'Earthly Paradise' - one which was not compatible with human nature. It was one of the ways in which the Catholic case continued to be stronger on rhetoric than on facts. Socialists, as Blatchford explained in his 'Socialism: a reply to the Pope', (1891) were aiming not at perfection but at a more just and equitable society, one where the poor did not work to support the idle. It is true that with the hindsight of a century, the 'human nature' argument seems one of the strongest arguments against the practicality of advanced

³⁴² 'Leo XIII on "The Condition of Labour"', p.157, quoted in Devas, *ibid*.

³⁴³ "'Catholic Socialism'", p.117

³⁴⁴ Peter Doyle, "'Nothing New and Nothing True": Some Socialist Reactions to *Rerum Novarum*', in C. Boutry (ed), *Rerum Novarum: Écriture, contenu et réception d'une Encyclique* (Rome, 1997), pp.367-382

Socialism or 'Communism'. However, here the Catholic writers over-played their hand. They exaggerated both the ideal nature of the society which the Socialists were attempting and the degree of 'levelling' which English Socialists desired to bring about. Fr Rickaby observed that under Socialist theories, men were not as they had been for the 'twenty-five centuries', but rather, the suppression of the individual and disappearance of the private person in the common body, 'which is supposed, not very kindly, to be characteristic of the Society of Jesus, has now taken place in all mankind, or at least all over ... the land in which the Earthly Paradise of Socialism is located'.³⁴⁵ In 'An Olive Branch on State Socialism', Devas had remarked of the 'Civil Power' under Socialism:

'Truly there is an amazing assumption of virtue. For Government is no ideal and impersonal force; it is but a collection of men, picked men if you will, but still men with all the weakness of our human nature...'³⁴⁶

In an age of so much patient and painstaking fact-finding, the Catholic writers sometimes over-indulged a little in rhetoric, particularly on the subject of the Middle Ages. Yet most of them, and Devas in particular, liked to accuse the Socialists of high-flown language, picturing themselves in contrast as the voices of calm good sense: Devas, typically, entitled one of his pamphlets, 'Plain Words on Socialism'.³⁴⁷

As the *Tablet* observed in a leading article which commented on W.S. Lilly's article on Darwinism in the *Nineteenth Century*, socialistic optimism for human nature was even less understandable in a society which had embraced the Darwinist theory. If Rousseau and Robespierre had been unrealistic in their hopes for the capacity of human beings to create for themselves a more perfect society, how much more unrealistic was it to harbour such hopes for:

'an animal whose attributes are constantly varying - whose original is not Jean-Jacques's perfect man in a state of nature, but, not to go further back, a troglodyte with half a brain, with the appetites and habits of a wild beast, with no conception of justice and with only half articulate cries for language?'.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ 'Three Socialist Fallacies', p.159

³⁴⁶ 'Olive Branch', p.328-9

³⁴⁷ Published in 1907, a few months after Devas's death.

³⁴⁸ *Tablet*, 23/1/1886, p.123

Devas, and the Catholic writers in general, expected even less virtue and wisdom from an entirely democratic government than under the *status quo*. Even as late as 1895, Fr George Tyrrell³⁴⁹ was unusual in understanding that unlike 'true socialism' which might be fairly seen as the suppression of the individual struggle for existence and 'the abortion of future progress', state socialism aimed merely at giving nature fair play by 'equality of opportunity'. Fr Tyrrell, unlike Devas, had clearly been disarmed by and to an extent converted to the 'new' Socialism. Yet 'equality of opportunity' and 'fair play' were in a sense what Socialists themselves would have claimed to want to realise. They can only have been exasperated by Fr Tyrrell's assumption that where Christianity prevailed, this happy state of affairs already existed:

'Christianity, with its Catholic conception of duty, has slowly broken up the old type of society; has brought the dignity of the individual person as such into recognition; has vindicated the supremacy of right over might; and, in virtue of its principles, tends to secure for all, not social equality or any other unnatural or immoral order of things, but a certain equality of opportunity, with fair play for the powers that God has given to each'.³⁵⁰

The debate over the meaning of 'Socialism' and, as a corollary, over whether any true Catholic could also be a 'Socialist', continued after 1900. Long after the other Churches had grown comfortable with the idea of 'limited' Socialism, the Catholic writers needed to constantly reassure themselves and their readers that those measures they advocated were not 'Socialistic'. As a reviewer of 'Books and Pamphlets' for the *Month* of June 1890 remarked,

'In these days, when a great social movement is gradually, and, we rejoice to be able to say, peacefully upheaving the civilized world, it is important for Catholics to know what to approve and what to condemn. However strongly they may advocate the claims of labour and the rights of the employed to a fair share in the profits of the employer, they cannot be Socialists in the sense in which the word Socialism is used by the Holy See, for a denial of all rights of private property in general joined to a revolt against public authority. Fr Best,³⁵¹ of the London

³⁴⁹ Fr George Tyrrell was educated at Stonyhurst and became a member of the Society of Jesus. He was later to part company with the Society - and the Church - over his sympathy for the Modernist movement.

³⁵⁰ 'The New Sociology', *Month*, August 1895, p.512

³⁵¹ The Rev Kenelm Digby Best of the London Oratory was educated at Ampleforth and Ware. He published poetry, essays (mostly on doctrinal matters), and contributed to the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* of 1907-1912.

Oratory, has done a timely service by his pamphlet, "Why no good Catholic can be a Socialist".³⁵²

Devas, writing in the *Dublin* immediately prior to the publication of *Rerum novarum*, played down differences among Catholics, claiming that they were the result of 'verbal confusion'. He felt that due largely to the work of Leo XIII and to International Congresses on the social question like that held at Liège in 1890, within the next few years 'all centres of Catholic teaching throughout the world' would be 'in substantial agreement on the main practical problems of economic science'. It was due to 'the verbal confusion of our age' that Catholics, while their meaning was right, used words 'which sound wrong'. This for Devas was one of four reasons why Catholics sounded at odds with each other over the social question when in fact, he believed, there was a considerable degree of consensus. The others were the tendency for Catholics unquestioningly to accept the conclusions of the 'vitiated intellectual atmosphere' in which so many of them lived; the trap into which some fell of adopting false principles without realising the consequences which logically followed from them; and when, having been misinformed on the circumstances of particular times and countries, Catholics leapt to a wrong diagnosis.³⁵³ The insistence that Catholics could only *appear* to be seriously at odds over the problem of the poor was characteristic of Devas. From the evidence of the journals, Fr Gasquet's remarks eight years later were nearer the mark: '... there is obviously, even amongst us Catholics, such divergence of opinion that any preliminary attempt to clear the ground with a view to agreement even on first principles is not uncommonly productive of no small amount of heat and temper'.³⁵⁴

If, despite Devas's hopes in 1891, there remained a considerable degree of ignorance, as well as disagreement, among the Catholic writers, then there must have been still more among the majority of Catholics - including the parish priests - who were rarely directly represented in the journals. Some inkling of this was apparent in Abbot Snow's essay entitled 'A Glimpse at Socialism' in the *Downside Review* of July 1895:

"He knows no more about Socialism than a pig knows about his own grandfather".
This graphic if ungraceful comment, overheard from the lips of a working man,

³⁵² *Month*, June 1890, p.301

³⁵³ 'English Catholics and the Social Question', *Dublin*, January 1891, pp.119-120

³⁵⁴ In a paper on 'Christian Democracy in Pre-Reformation Times' read to the 1898 Catholic Conference and printed in the *Tablet*, 3/9/1898, p.365

aptly hits off the apathy of many towards the progress of events around them. Some such listlessness preceded the French Revolution ...' ... 'That Socialism is extending, few will deny: what socialism is, comparatively few understand. It is a bugbear or a fairy, a bogey or a syren, something dreadful or something inspiring, and all the more so because unknown and indefinite'.³⁵⁵

Abbot Snow pointed out that it was of urgent importance to find out how likely Socialism was to come about, how subversive it was to order; and how far opposed to justice and morality or antagonistic to the worship of God and the good of religion. If it was any of those things, then 'every Christian should be armed for the defence of Christian teaching'. Should individual doctrines or particular schemes not be opposed to justice, morality, or religion, then Catholics should enquire whether even so, they would be conducive to the welfare of the people and improvements on existing arrangements. Only thus could Catholics hold their own and hope to influence discussions rather than be justly subject to sneers about their ignorance. He saw socialist theory as being vulnerable on three counts: on its failure to take into account the vices and weakness of human nature, on the absence of a fixed and definite rule of right and wrong to guide conduct, and on the history of past social developments. 'The establishment of the socialistic state in full swing would not alter human nature, and what is to counteract the working of the passions, ambition, greed, jealousy, lust of power, anger, idleness and the rest?'³⁵⁶ Abbot Snow's remarks on 'Socialism' as a 'bugbear' or a 'bogey' are reminiscent of Cardinal Manning's comment five years earlier: 'Here, however, Socialism is little studied; it is a kind of party cry'.³⁵⁷ They also formed a tacit admission of just how little progress the Catholic response to Socialism had made despite the debate of the previous ten or fifteen years. Similarly, Fr Rickaby remarked in 1898 - using similar phrases to those employed by Devas fifteen years before - that: 'It is likely that the true economic remedy lies ... in some temperate zone between what we may call the torrid zone of Socialism and the frigid zone of Individualism'. He added,

'What we seem to want is a thorough theoretical exploration of the possibilities and probable outcomes of Individualism on the one hand and of Socialism on the other. Thus we may hope some day to discern, what no mortal has hitherto discerned, the needful compromise within the two'.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ 'A Glimpse at Socialism' by "TBS" [Abbot Snow], *Downside Review*, July 1895, pp.152-153

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.156.

³⁵⁷ Manning to Count de Mun, 25/1/1891, 'Letters', p.22

The Catholic writers were no nearer to arriving at consensus of their own on this vital question than they had been when Devas published his 'Groundwork'. The *Tablet* remarked in 'The Review of the Churches':

'Dr Vaughan is not likely ever to join the Social Federation League, but he is in favour of extending that limited socialism of which our free libraries and parks and Board Schools are examples, and thereby providing the people with wholesome dwelling places and rational recreation. But though he would move in this direction, he is not advanced in his views. He is of a conservative cast of mind, and can only be said to be a Socialist in the sense in which strictly, and not jestingly, speaking, "we are all Socialists now"' ³⁵⁹

In 1900 Cardinal Vaughan's Lenten Pastoral was published as a penny pamphlet under the title 'Principles of Catholic Socialism', a demonstration of how acceptable the term (when suitably qualified) had become in the five years since Devas's expostulations on Professor Nitti.

Despite lasting confusion over the very terms of the debate, certain of the writers were trying to make more sophisticated and reasoned responses to the case for Socialism. In January and February 1891, the *Month* carried an extended essay, entitled 'A Socialist's Dream', by Fr Michael Maher, Jesuit and philosopher. Fr Maher, who was the author of *Psychology* (1890) in the series of Catholic Manuals of Philosophy, and contributed to the *Dublin Review* and the *Fortnightly Review* as well as the *Month*, was later to be involved in the founding of the Catholic Social Guild.³⁶⁰ Here he set out to examine Socialism (in this case, quite definitely in the form which would now be termed 'Communism') and show that it was unworkable. Appearing in the months immediately prior to the appearance of *Rerum novarum*, Fr Maher's article was wider in scope and in some ways more prescient than many of the essays to be written in response to the Encyclical. The influences of Devas and especially of Cardinal Manning are apparent throughout the essay. Fr Maher, like Manning and Devas, paid tribute to the part played by the Socialists in bringing about a decline in the old unquestioning faith in unbridled individualism. The assumption that 'the permission of free play to individual selfishness would always secure the maximum benefit to the community at large' had been 'one of the most absurd and most mischievous

³⁵⁸ 'Some difficulties of Socialism', *Month*, January 1898, p.22

³⁵⁹ *Tablet*, 23/4/1892, p.662

³⁶⁰ Michael Maher SJ (and later LittD) also contributed to the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* of 1907-1912, by which time he was Director of Studies and Professor of Pedagogies at Stonyhurst.

superstitions that ever took possession of any Legislature'.³⁶¹ Socialistic writers had proved to demonstration that excessively large profit to the individual might mean large loss to the nation, and had established beyond question that 'government is under as strict obligations to protect the public against the rapacity of the private enterprise of its own citizens as against violent assault from a foreign foe'. Fr Maher too also warned that 'it would be an error scarcely less noxious than the teaching of socialism itself' for Catholics to suppose themselves to be bound to defend or approve, many of the 'enormities' of the present régime'. His essay formed a detailed examination of the Socialistic society depicted by the American writer, Edward Bellamy, in *Looking Backward*. This political fable, set in an imaginary Boston of the year 2000, which the *Tablet* described as 'a curious little pamphlet',³⁶² sold over 40,000 copies in England during the 1880s, and in America inspired a new socialistic movement of its own.³⁶³ Fr Maher remarked of the book that, 'On the whole, we doubt if a more attractive method of urging the case for socialism could be invented'.³⁶⁴ He described briefly the system it propounded - 'thorough-going State socialism', with all productive wealth 'nationalized', education compulsory until the age of twenty-one, and labour until forty-five, and religion an entirely personal option. Fr Maher first attacked the book on economic grounds, arguing that the first problem it posed was how to increase the income of the nation so that this system could be possible. It would be necessary to increase production per head, not decrease it, to achieve the universal affluence described in *Looking Backward*. The Socialistic system might be more equitable, but the total product would be much diminished. Fr Maher acknowledged that while this objection carried more force than Socialists seemed to realise, it did not alter the fact that even on this question Socialistic writers had contributed much of value.

Fr Maher next turned to what might be termed the 'human nature' argument against Socialism - the assumption that all men and women would readily work entirely for the common good - which 'utterly baseless illusion' he saw as 'an essential feature of all recent constructive socialism'. He went on to present an 'best-case scenario' apology for capitalism, arguing that under the *laissez faire* system, at least the fittest rose to the top, even if they were only fittest in 'the sense of being best able to foresee the relations of demand and supply', and they were highly effective in catering for the public wants.

³⁶¹ 'A Socialist's Dream', pt. 1, p.11

³⁶² *Tablet*, 15/6/1889, pp.943-944

³⁶³ Lynd, *op. cit.*, p.369

Where enterprises were undertaken by the State, however, 'routine and red-tapism rule', and instead of constant efforts at efficiency and economy: '... the most purposeless waste often goes on for years ... Productive industries carried on by the State are, it is notorious, far inferior in point of management to those worked by private enterprise'. Here he was in agreement with Devas, who (in a review of the *Political Science Quarterly*, in the *Dublin*)³⁶⁵ had pointed to the English telegraphic service and the Prussian State railways as being - even though exceptionally well-run for Government institutions - far less efficient than the American telegraphs and the English railways worked by private companies.

Under the present system the problems of fluctuating demand were met by calling in additional labour or laying workers off, 'a method which undoubtedly inflicts great hardship, but at all events it solves the difficulty'. Under Socialism, the problem would be insoluble. Fr Maher concluded with a vehement attack on the corrupting effects on the central power of the extension of government authority, which he felt could only lead to totalitarianism:

'Governments would not be human if they did not use their influence to further their own objects, and they can hardly use it without abusing it ... This universal and complete dependence on Government inevitably results in a condition of virtual slavery, which to many minds constitutes the weightiest objection to socialism ... Mr Bellamy tells us that the whole secret of the new system lies in the application of the principle of compulsory military service to all the business of life. What is this, pray, but absolute and universal slavery? Surely, life would not be worth living under such a system. Liberty is the dearest right of man - its sacrifice the noblest oblation he can make to God in religion. But a condition in which he is involuntarily deprived of it soon becomes, even amid the most luxurious surroundings, little better than intolerable'.³⁶⁶

The current freedom of the press, he warned, would become, with all other freedoms, things of the past; and there would be the rise of a powerful bureaucratic class. Although its arguments were more fitted to meet the most advanced forms of Socialism rather than the watered-down variety England was to experience in the twentieth century, Fr Maher's essay marked a definite step-forward in Catholic treatment of the subject. It challenged Socialism, not only on what had become the standard Catholic grounds - that private property was part of the Divine Order, that attempts to keep everyone on the same

³⁶⁴ 'A Socialist's Dream', pt. 1, p.3

³⁶⁵ *Dublin*, July 1889, pp.212-213

³⁶⁶ 'A Socialist's Dream', pt. 2, pp.176-178

economic or social level flew in the face of human nature, and that the Socialists were unrealistic in expecting 'perfection' - but on specific points of economics and practicality. Here, while he was clearly influenced by Devas's work, Fr Maher's essay showed a considerable advance on Devas's constant pleas for everyone to know their place.

Mayor, writing of the religious journalists in general, has remarked that they were afraid to ridicule Socialism in case it made them appear unsophisticated: they had a 'secret fear of being put in the wrong by the economists as well as by the geologists and the biologists'.³⁶⁷ In the 1890s, especially after the publication of *Rerum novarum* in May 1891, this seems to have become less the case with the Catholic writers. In January 1893 Fr Richard Clarke, editor of the *Month*, delivered a lecture to the Social Democratic Club at Sidney Hall, Battersea. His lecture on 'Altruism, True and False' seems to have been received with polite scepticism by an audience which failed, as the *Tablet* reported, to see the finer differences between 'natural' and 'Christian' benevolence, while they also dwelt on that fact that Christian altruism had proved a failure, and so must give way to something more effective: 'A want of historical knowledge prevented them from seeing the immense successes of Christianity ...'.³⁶⁸ It was a sign of the changing times that such an invitation should have been given, and been accepted.

This growing confidence among Catholic writers in the late 1880s and especially, in the 1890s was demonstrated by their increasing willingness to join wider literary society in its satirising of Socialism. Here the book reviews of the *Dublin* and the *Tablet* are illuminating. The reviews in the *Dublin*, which tended to confine itself to those novels which touched on religious or social matters were (although almost all anonymous) almost as illuminating in their way as the longer, and perhaps more carefully worded, articles. George Gissing's three major social novels of the 1880s, for example, were all briefly reviewed by the *Dublin* in ways which served to illustrate several common attitudes in the Roman Catholic approach to the problem of the poor. The January 1886 issue carried a review of Gissing's *Demos: a story of English Socialism*, in which the hero, finding himself suddenly wealthy, decides to put his principles into practice, and founds a Socialistic mining enterprise. The gradual effects upon his character of the possession of wealth are traced until, in the words of the *Dublin* reviewer, he 'comes to regard questions

³⁶⁷ Mayor, *op. cit.* p.344

³⁶⁸ *Tablet*, 21/1/1893, p.83

from the standpoint of the capitalist rather than of the labourer, and mines ... accordingly very soon lose their character of a socialist experiment'. The reviewer felt that Gissing was only too optimistic, remarking that if the 'forces and motives of Socialism' were really as feeble, and the leaders of the movement as ignorant, as the author described, society would have nothing to fear from 'this disintegrating tendency'.³⁶⁹ The review brings in two recurrent themes of the 1880s and 1890s - that Socialism was a dangerously persuasive doctrine, not a specious argument which could safely be ignored; and yet a doctrine which is compatible neither with human nature nor the wider natural order, so that any new order ushered in by Socialism would quickly collapse. Gissing's next novel, *Thyrza* (reviewed July 1887), a satire on some forms of modern benevolence, was approved because it showed how 'the philanthropic enthusiast, with his elaborate schemes for the amelioration of the lower classes, becomes the instrument of wrecking the lives of those he chiefly wishes to benefit' - an illustration of the Roman Catholic belief that the Church was the only 'expert' in the field of social philanthropy, or as they still preferred, significantly, to term it, 'charity'.³⁷⁰ Lastly, the reviewer (July 1889) of Gissing's *The Nether World*, 'a very melancholy book' describing 'in language which is only too truthful, grinding toil, hopeless poverty, and drunken degradation', condemned the lack of 'a trace or glimmer of religion in the book'.³⁷¹

As the 1890s progressed, the reviews of novels revealed a greater willingness to poke fun at Socialism and its exponents. The *Tablet* commended *Theories: Studies from a Modern Woman*: (published anonymously in 1894) as 'a very dainty satire upon a fashionable woman's desire to toy with socialism and to play at sharing in the common life': the heroine carries her principles to such ridiculous lengths that she refuses to discipline her children, exposing them to infectious illness among the poor. The moral, as the *Tablet* concluded, was that again theory had 'to give way to the old selfish wisdom, which stands for the piled-up experiences of generations, who have taken up the family as the primary unit from which duties and affections radiate'.³⁷² The concept of a Socialist utopia was parodied in Mrs Orpen's *Perfection City*. Reviewing this, the *Tablet* commented:

³⁶⁹ *Dublin*, January 1886, pp.190-196

³⁷⁰ *Dublin*, July 1887, p.184

³⁷¹ *Dublin*, October 1890, p.465

³⁷² *Tablet*, 5/5/1894, pp.689-690

‘A little crisis arrives when Olive receives a present of a bracelet and the horrible question suggests itself as to whether it should be treated as the common property of all the women of the settlement. Olive is felt to have settled that question with the remark, “As if any mortal woman could ever care for a community bracelet”’.³⁷³

The reviewing in the *Dublin* of January 1887 of Henry James’s *The Princess Casamassima* also attempted to strike a sophisticated and world-weary note, remarking that: ‘The irrepressible Socialist threatens to be as great a bore in fiction as in politics’.³⁷⁴ In April and May 1890 *Merry England* ran a two-part story, *Miss Johnstone* by M.E. Francis, which although light-hearted, formed an attack on Socialistic ideals. In this a magazine editor, Mr Brinsley, is confronted with an short story which had ‘but one drawback - the keynote of the whole story was what Mr Brinsley on first perusal scrupled not to term “rank Socialism”’, and the hero, while ‘a natural and very loveable creation, was nevertheless a Revolutionist of the first water’. The editor argues with its author about her socialistic beliefs; she talks eloquently about the slum conditions she has seen, and he accuses her of naivety: ‘Man is only a superior kind of beast of prey, Miss Johnstone, and there must always be a certain amount of oppression and injustice in this world’.³⁷⁵ Miss Johnstone is treated as a somewhat comic character; wrong-headed, and decidedly over-independent. Gentle fun is also poked at the pompous but genial editor, with his *laissez faire* attitudes. The moral of the story is clear: while the editor in his apathy might have done no good, the author, with her socialist principles, had done a great deal of harm.

These comments reveal what a change had occurred during the last fifteen or twenty years: in the 1870s it had hardly been possible for the Catholic writers to denounce Socialism strongly enough: it was a pernicious doctrine by means of which the working-classes would be lead, by those social superiors who should have been setting them a good example, to perdition. By 1898 Fr Rickaby felt able to remark:

‘One should read Socialist works and listen to Socialist speeches rather in sorrow than in anger. The bulk of Socialists are poor, half-educated, simple-minded people, able to take but a narrow view of life, which view includes much misery and small hope ... what wonder if they readily believe that their misery is all of the

³⁷³ *Tablet*, 31/7/1897, p.169. There was a tendency of contemporary writers to use female characters, as exemplifying the emotional, individualistic, unreasoning side of human nature, to highlight the practical difficulties of Socialism as they saw them.

³⁷⁴ *Dublin*, January 1887, p.197

³⁷⁵ ‘Miss Johnstone’, *Merry England*, April 1890, p.426.

rich man's making, that their submersion has been his elevation, and that they can only rise by bringing him down to their level?'³⁷⁶

These were examples of the comments which Charles Plater must have had in mind when, looking back on this period in 1908, he wrote of 'the condescending tone towards Socialists to be found in a number of Catholic journals at the time, as though Socialists were misguided and easily defeated by homespun wisdom and simplistic Catholic arguments'.³⁷⁷

The Catholic writers also gleaned some encouragement from their share of a wider belief that the English character was fundamentally unsympathetic to Socialism. In taking their part in the trend of the 1890s for generalising on national characteristics, the Catholic writers usually emphasised the 'Celtic' characteristics peculiar to the majority of their co-religionists. Discussing the Settlements being established under the aegis of the Catholic Social Union, a writer using the pseudonym 'M'³⁷⁸ commented on the poor of Irish descent in the East End that:

'... Side by side with the strong receptive and intuitive faculty of the Celt, they are plentifully endowed with the stubbornness of the Saxon ... And while singularly generous - magnanimous even - to their own caste, they have a keen eye to the main chance, together with intuitive enlightenment and a tendency to unscrupulosity as to the means of pursuing it, in their dealings with their social superiors'.³⁷⁹

Abbot Snow was optimistic that the sturdy, independent character of the English workman (which, he felt, owed much to the Medieval guilds) would see through the specious promises of Socialism and above all, would reject any attempts at sudden revolution. Here too, was a glimpse of the belief that the condition of the working-classes in England was gradually and peacefully changing for the better: 'If Frenchmen ever would be free they must walk in the footsteps of their Anglo-Saxon rivals: they must decentralise, they must be tolerant, they must be steady, and, above all, they must learn to wait'.³⁸⁰ In a review of

³⁷⁶ 'Three Socialist Fallacies', p.165

³⁷⁷ Doyle, ('Charles Plater SJ), *op. cit.*, p.401

³⁷⁸ 'One Aspect of the Catholic Social Union' by 'M', *Month*, November 1895, pp.329-330. The 1909 Index to the *Month* also lists the author as 'M'. This was possibly Fr James Moyes, editor of the *Dublin* and contributor to the *Month*.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.329-330

³⁸⁰ In a review of *De la Liberté Politique dans l'État Moderne*, by A. Desjardins, *Dublin*, July 1894, p.219

various publications on the English Socialists, the *Month* of April 1898 approvingly remarked the conclusion of Pierre Verhaegen of Louvain that “the English people is not made for Socialism”: that they are too much enamoured of ‘self-help and private enterprise, are too religious, and know their own interests too well’.³⁸¹ (A third aspect of this new trend was a stress on the role played by Jewish employers in the ‘sweated’ clothing industry; part of the increasingly combative tone employed by the *Dublin* and the *Month* towards Judaism as a whole at the end of the century).

The debate over the acceptability, or otherwise, of Socialism was not resolved in this period, largely because the debate remained clouded by ambiguities of terminology. Doyle has remarked that the Catholic Federation, begun in 1906, seems likely to have been founded partly because of clerical fears about the spread of socialistic trends among Catholic workers.³⁸² Leslie Toke, writing on ‘Some Ways and Means of Social Study’, for the *Downside Review* of March 1907, remarked that the Catholic Social Union had been shunned by some because they had been so confused as to think that it was tied up with Socialism.³⁸³

(iii)

Not the least because of their continued uncertainty on when social legislation became ‘socialistic’, the Catholic writers were generally chary of increases of Government control. Devas, never arriving at a really clear or consistent distinction between the two, came closer than most Catholic writers to doing so. In a review of the *Political Science Quarterly* he claimed that the ‘Civil Power’ in England over the last ten years had exceeded its rights in compelling parents to send their children to irreligious schools and by making them pay for the schools; and by the way in which an unlimited liability had been imposed on local ratepayers to pay for local poverty and vice, while allowing them no control over the source of this poverty and this vice:

‘Moreover, in the relieving poverty, the Civil Power grossly and shockingly tramples on the rights of the family, and demoralizes it by lessening immensely

³⁸¹ Review of *Socialistes Anglais* by Pierre Verhaegen, in the *Month*, April 1898, p.444

³⁸² Doyle, (Catholic Federation) *op. cit.*, pp.466-467

³⁸³ ‘Some Ways and Means of Social Study’, *Downside Review*, March 1907, pp.38-40

both parental and filial duties, as all can testify who know the working of the Poor Law. And the bureaucratic centralization of our poor relief almost equals that of our elementary education. I doubt whether any Continental State can show two institutions more thoroughly and mischievously socialistic'.³⁸⁴

(Manning, too, felt that 'there was no legislation more purely socialistic' than the existing Poor Law).³⁸⁵ If State education was followed, as Devas felt was likely, by the spread of State insurance and State poor-relief - then 'deadly blows' would be struck both at family life and at 'many of the sweetest and tenderest relations among men'. He went on to take the Government to task for not introducing an English equivalent to the American Homesteads Exemption Act; for not reforming the drink laws; for not punishing owners of insanitary or overcrowded dwellings; and for not providing its own workmen with homes, and compelling the railways and the other large or 'joint-stock' companies to do likewise. Indeed, Devas felt that every employer should be made 'responsible for the decent habitation of every workman who worked in his employment or upon his property'. Elsewhere he had argued for reform of the prisons and the Poor Law. In all these and in other cases, he felt, the Civil Power had neglected its primary duty of protecting the poor, exposing them to the 'tyranny of others or of their own evil passions'. Yet he insisted, 'For the Government indeed to act as universal benevolent landlord, and to provide decent dwellings for all the poorer classes, would be arrant State Socialism, nearly as injurious as our present Individualism'.³⁸⁶

Devas hailed the Pope's speech to the French Pilgrimage of Labour in October 1889 as 'an epoch in the history of the Church and the Papacy in their dealings with the social question', because for the first time 'we are given a criterion for judging all social legislation'. In Devas's paraphrase, if the poor were 'seriously exposed to immorality, or injustice, or indignities or injury to their family life', then - and only then - the Government was entitled to intervene, but only with moderation. It was not to act as though it could do as it wished to alter 'the established relations between men and the ownership or use of property', but rather aim at 'the minimum of disturbance compatible with a thorough remedy of the evil'.³⁸⁷ In 'Work or Bread' Devas came still nearer to laying down his general principle for limiting the role of the State. Existing laws 'to promote the health, the

³⁸⁴ 'Olive Branch', p.331

³⁸⁵ Cardinal Manning and the Condition of the Working Classes', *Tablet*, 10/12/1887, p.931

³⁸⁶ 'Olive Branch', p.331

³⁸⁷ 'Leo XIII on State Socialism', *Tablet*, 29/10/1887, pp. 681-682

thrift, and the virtue of the poorer classes' should be better enforced, and apprenticeships should be restored to end 'the senseless and ruinous liberty' now possessed by working class girls and youths:

'Moreover, the greatest impetus would be given, not to socialistic schemes of national insurance, but to all the useful forms of private and mutual, and local and professional insurance, the task of the Government being merely to facilitate their existence, and prevent their abuse. And if the law led to the restriction of reckless competition, and fostered the restoration of trade guilds, so much the better for masters and men, for tradesmen and the public'.³⁸⁸

In an attempt (unusual among Catholic writers) to categorise poverty, Devas arrived at four classes of the poor: the 'ordinary poor', the 'extraordinary' poor (those who had suffered from some catastrophe), 'rogues and vagabonds' and lastly, the unemployed. The last three, Devas felt should be dealt with by the law:

'Let all who derive income in the shape of rent, profit, or interest from farms, factories, mines, railways, shops, or houses, be responsible, in proportion to their income, for all those who live and labour on this property, and let every master be responsible for his servants'.³⁸⁹

Devas went so far so to suggest that employers should be legally liable to support their servants for at least a year after they had left. The establishment of mendicant farms would take care of the rogues and vagabonds. This would leave only one group to be dealt with by the charitable: '... the ordinary poor who we can never eliminate, and ought not to wish to if we could'. Once rid of the rogue and tramps, there would be abundant provision for the 'ordinary poor' from the amount already given in voluntary alms. 'The works of Christian charity' would then have 'a fair and free trade open to them once more' as the Poor Law system could be done away with entirely, and particular responsibility could be substituted for general responsibility. The 'ordinary poor' were, in Devas's own very telling phrase, 'The poor in the *natural and scriptural sense*'.³⁹⁰ He went on to list 'natural' poverty as pertaining to 'the widows and orphans, the blind, the lame, the dumb, the sick and the maimed, and many other victims of particular calamities, failings and weaknesses, we shall indeed always have with us ...'. These people would never be left in

³⁸⁸ 'Work or Bread', p.318

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.317

³⁹⁰ My italics.

want 'wherever any large portion of the spirit of Christianity prevails'.³⁹¹ This nice blend of old-fashioned charity and advanced social legislation was very much Devas's own. But here, amid talk of the causes and the victims of poverty as they had existed in Biblical times, the widowed and orphaned, the halt and the lame, was where the Catholic writers could feel at home in the debate. Not so with talk of exploitative landlords, tyrannous employers, poisonous trades, over-work, over-crowding or under-employment.

By the standards of the contemporary Catholic debate, Devas was confident in his judgment of when social legislation crossed the line of acceptability, either because it was 'Socialistic' or simply because it threatened to interfere with economic freedom for no sufficient reason. Yet his pronouncements on these subjects were never so clear or confident as those of Cardinal Manning, nor did he so emphatically and vociferously support the increase in legislation designed to improve life for the working-classes as did the Cardinal. In a letter to the *Times* of 6/2/1888 on the problem of the unemployed, Manning had stated:

'It is obvious that the Civil State and all its legislative and extensive action is nothing more than human society administering, protecting, and developing its own welfare. Its whole action upon itself must be social; but between social and socialistic there is an impassable gulf'.³⁹²

While in his 'How shall Catholics vote at the Coming Election?' he had stated that it was 'the duty of Catholics to promote all laws which carry the beneficent action of the legislature into the humblest homes of the people. The welfare of the people is the supreme law, and no just laws can be too popular'.³⁹³

Devas's attitude to legislation, except in certain instances - such as his enthusiasm for a 'Homesteads Exemption' Act and the readjustment of taxation to bear on industrial rather than agricultural wealth, (which he advocated in, for example, 'Is England on the Road to Ruin?' in the *Month*) - was one of reluctance.³⁹⁴ He usually found himself, often a result of his own arguments, acknowledging the need for it, although sometimes only as a last resource: such as the need to make the large employers, who had lost any sense of

³⁹¹ 'Work or Bread', p.305

³⁹² 'Letters', p.5

³⁹³ 'How shall Catholics vote at the Coming Election?', p.407

³⁹⁴ 'Is England on the Road to Ruin?', *Month*, May 1887, p.16

paternalistic feeling for their workers, to behave by them in a responsible way. The more radical Dr William Barry noted and deplored Devas's somewhat lukewarm attitude, pointing out (in a commentary on Devas's *Groundwork of Economics and Political Economy* and the Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*) that it hardly kept pace with his disapproval of classical political economy:

'... a Christian economist, which is the account given of himself by Mr Devas, may well take heart; for though he should urge great and vital changes in the common way of handling his science, and should even hint - a little more timidly perhaps - at the revision of our present laws touching land, labour, and capital, he cannot be charged with desiring these and the like alterations more ardently than the Holy Father and the Society of Jesus'.³⁹⁵

While he retained his inherent, Catholic distrust in increasing legislative intervention, especially at national level, Devas's attitude to social legislation did soften over this era. In an article on 'Christian Democracy' in the *Dublin Review* in 1898, he outlined his own programme of the measures he felt were needed to solve 'the problem of the poor': the 'binding' of all the working-classes into 'associations'; workmen's assurance; boards of arbitration and conciliation; the removal of married women from factory work; the protection of all workpeople from 'excessive toil'; international agreements to prevent slave labour driving down the price of goods unfairly; the multiplication of 'small and secure owners of property'; the provision of 'a decent and secure dwelling for every family'; war against 'usury, monopoly, and commercial fraud'; reform of the drink trade; the 'stringent enforcement' of Sunday rest; and 'fair wages, fair prices, fair rents, and a fair system of taxation'. All implied the necessity for legislation. He pointed out that such measures were already receiving strong support from many Catholics across Europe and in America, and by some at home: although Catholics as a whole were still slow to grasp a change in their situation, still confused by 'the strife of tongues', and still bound fast by the 'rotting cords' of Liberalism.³⁹⁶

Devas's qualms over legislation formed one of the areas in which his socio-economic ideas, in many ways broadly in line with those of Manning, most markedly diverged from them. By the 1880s the Cardinal, while always maintaining that legislation should be avoided where matters could be mended without it, had long since accepted that the

³⁹⁵ 'Labour and Capital, Limited', p.344

³⁹⁶ 'Christian Democracy', pp.142-144.

problem of the poor was such that it could not be reached by charity alone but must also be tackled by legislative measures. On the housing of the poor, for example, he wrote in a letter of 2 November 1883 to Charles Dilke that 'Without a high-handed executive nothing will be done till another generation has been morally destroyed'.³⁹⁷ In the context of emigration he remarked in the course of a delegation to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office that the condition of the poor was such that no voluntary aid would be sufficient.³⁹⁸

Devas, if less enthusiastic than Manning on the subject of legislation, was far more so than most of his fellow writers. It was in keeping with their ambivalent attitude to Manning's social ideas that none of the periodicals carried a list of his wide-ranging suggestions for practical (usually legislative) ways of helping the poor. Even *Merry England*, in some ways ahead of its time among the Catholic periodicals, and often perceived as intensely 'Manningite', to a great extent shared their opposition to 'excessive' state intervention. An article recommending the extension of the franchise to women - 'The Cry of the Mothers' by E. M. Lynch - hoped that such a state of affairs could come about without state intervention,³⁹⁹ while another article - 'Ich Dien' by David Urquhart - spoke out against over-reliance by the individual on the state, which, while 'it saves men trouble by releasing them from all responsibility, destroys the principle of self-action, extinguishes zeal and enterprise, enervates the existing race of men, and condemns them to, as it were, a perpetual childhood'.⁴⁰⁰ This concern, shared with wider society, was raised consistently by all the journals, and most of all by the *Tablet*. Many of the writers, when brought up against the need for legislation, took refuge in vagueness. An anonymous commentator on the housing crisis for the *Tablet* remarked that if an employer was not himself able to provide 'wholesome dwellings' for his workmen, 'they are entitled somehow to suitable homes, and public bodies should insist upon the demolition of unhealthy houses and the substitution of dwellings fit for human habitation ...'. Similarly, the necessities of life should be supplied to the sick or elderly workman 'either in his wage or from other sources'. 'Public bodies' could only mean national or local government, and other sources could only mean some form of pension or 'outdoor relief', but the writer chose not to say so.⁴⁰¹ Other writers waived the question entirely - even those like James Britten and Henry

³⁹⁷ Quoted in McClelland, (*Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence*), *op. cit.*, p.137

³⁹⁸ Reported in 'State-Directed Colonization', *Tablet*, 12/2/1887, p.238

³⁹⁹ 'The Cry of the Mothers', *Merry England*, April 1886.

⁴⁰⁰ 'Ich Dien', *Merry England*, February 1886.

⁴⁰¹ *Tablet*, January 1898, p.5

Harrod, both familiar with the day-to-day realities of life for the poor. In his review of *No 5, John Street* for the *Month*, Britten pointed out that the hardworking and the 'vicious' alike might find themselves in the workhouse, and commented that:

'So long as the same end awaits the virtuous and the vicious, is it wonderful if - the sense of responsibility and of the future being absent - that course should be adopted which promises most enjoyment? I do not know how the matter is to be remedied and we may be thankful that folk do not present to themselves the two alternatives in all their hard and bitter simplicity'.⁴⁰²

Henry Harrod warned against state intervention over the housing of the poor; his remarks formed a stark contrast to Cardinal Manning's on the same subject. He preferred to rely on 'philanthropic assistance' and added, in a telling phrase, 'For ourselves, we are content to go on patching until something better offers'.⁴⁰³ An (anonymous) writer on 'The Religious Condition of England' for the *Dublin* of January 1901 acknowledged that many of the poor were 'sacrificed body and soul to provide for the needs, the pleasures, the amusements, the luxuries, and the vices of the rich', yet went on, 'No doubt some of these evils might be lessened by legislation, but it is not the part of the present writer to suggest any such remedies'.⁴⁰⁴

Even Fr Maher, who in his critique of *Looking Backward* admitted the necessity of 'vigorous intervention on the part of the State' to protect 'the weak and unfortunate' (that vague phraseology again) added, 'it is not, however, our office at present to describe the lines on which we believe these ameliorative measures should proceed; our aim has been merely to point out the defects which vitiate the socialistic panacea'.⁴⁰⁵ Sometimes the old Catholic response - that social legislation could do nothing to ameliorate evils arising from moral causes - was adhered to, as by the *Month*, in its somewhat shocked review of Bishop Bagshawe's 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor':

'Still there are evils enough and to spare, yet we fear that they lie deeper down than any legislation can, under existing circumstances, efficiently reach. We fear that they will never be remedied till the work of Henry and Elizabeth is undone, and the

⁴⁰² 'No 5, John Street', *Month*, November 1899, p.503

⁴⁰³ 'Dwellings', p.437

⁴⁰⁴ 'The Religious Condition of England', *Dublin*, January 1901, p.106

⁴⁰⁵ 'A Socialist's Dream', pt.2, p.188

whole social machine which is so sadly out of gear is set right by the healing influence of the religion of Jesus Christ'.⁴⁰⁶

Those like Manning, Bagshawe, Devas and Dewe, who did press for social intervention, all at some point in their arguments sought to point out that it was no more radical an interference in individual freedoms than was the enforced purchase of land by the Government for the purpose of building railways. In two areas in particular the Catholic writers felt that increased State interference was to be resisted at all costs. These were, first and foremost, in education; and secondly, in the provision of poor relief. Devas referred to '... that most unChristian proposal, that poor relief should become "a function of the State"...'.⁴⁰⁷ and elsewhere remarked that the current Poor Law was in contradiction with the Christian doctrine of the care due to old age. Yet the *Tablet* every week carried appeals from the clergy on behalf of their poor parishioners, of which the following plea from Henry Farmer SJ of St Beuno's College was not untypical:

'Sir, would you allow me to bring to the notice of your charitable readers the following case of poverty and distress? A poor widow living in a small Welsh town is very anxious to place two of her six young children in a Catholic orphanage ... Besides supporting her six children by hard work at a mangle, this good woman has the care of a father and brother, who are completely helpless and bedridden. These two poor invalids, who are lying in an adjoining house alone and unattended, may live on for many a year'.⁴⁰⁸

How were the writers' beliefs that the poor should be encouraged to look after themselves and their own to be reconciled with cases like this? The idea that the state might provide old-age pensions was especially reviled; dutiful children should look after their elderly parents. But who was to care for those aged poor who were childless, or whose own children were in poverty? Here was another way in which the modern poor refused to fit into the convenient categories into which the writers mentally placed them.

Two articles arising from the publication in 1886 of the second annual report of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children provided an excellent illustration of the ways in which the general Catholic attitude and Manning's own attitude to legislation were in contrast; and the tone and terminology habitual to both, almost more so. Manning wrote an

⁴⁰⁶ *Month*, April 1885, p.585

⁴⁰⁷ Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, July 1892, p.187

⁴⁰⁸ *Tablet*, 25/5/1889, pp.817-818

article entitled 'The Child of the English Savage' for the *Contemporary Review* of April 1886. The *Tablet* reported (without comment) his remarks as follows:

'Its [the SPCC's] next proposals will be, first: to place the child of the English savage on the same level as his dog. Already the English savage has learned that it is not safe nor decent to knock his cattle about, but he has all sorts of maxims as to parental rights - his house being his castle and the like - which make it both safe and decent and altogether as it ought to be, to knock his child about ... We need a straight-forward Draconian code against it. Today, boys and girls are being hurt, degraded, killed, that reckless men may sing songs to personal liberty, parental rights, and God knows what. There are those that say - as that ugly mongrel of falsehood and truth has it: "You cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament". We might commend these to the English brick fields and coal mines of twenty-five years ago. What was it set them in harmony with the Christian conscience of the land?'⁴⁰⁹

Manning here was much ahead of his time, helping to establish in England the idea of 'children's rights'. The *Tablet*'s own review of the Report appeared three weeks later, under the heading 'Cruelty to Children'. An anonymous review, its somewhat stately manner is rather in the style of the article on 'Catholics and Technical Education' which appeared in the *Dublin Review* of October 1890, and again, it is possible that Bishop Vaughan may have been the author. However its tone is also in keeping with the *Tablet*'s general style, and it could equally have been the work of the Editor, Snead-Cox or of another contributor:

'The authority of parents over their children is too sacred a thing to be lightly abrogated, but when this authority is atrociously abused, as in the cases before us, it is high time that stringent measures were taken, even at the risk of "grandmotherly legislation" on the subject. It has been truly said that you cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament; the root of all morality lying much deeper than to be reached by any mere human laws. Still, until the time when men shall have been aroused from the stupor of unfeeling brutality in which so many in this country are sunk by influences which we hope are very slowly but surely gaining ground, the objective morality enforced by Act of Parliament is better than no morality at all. For this reason the Bill for the Better Protection of Children ... cannot fail to secure the approbation and hearty support of all who ... know how utterly forlorn and wretched is much of the child-life in the large towns, where public opinion does not busy itself about the affairs of its neighbours as is the case in smaller places'.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ *Tablet*, 15/5/1886, p.770

⁴¹⁰ *Tablet*, 4/9/1886, p.362

This paragraph contained almost all the key preoccupations of the *Tablet* and the other journals: an emphasis on the freedom of the individual and the role of the parent; a belief in the superiority of the moral environment away from the towns; together with the characteristic reluctance to see legislation on socio-economic issues, and the insistence that such legislation was only a stop-gap pending more profound moral improvement. Although the 1890s saw a perceptible softening of attitudes to social legislation, these overlying attitudes remained. Indeed, the entire Catholic debate on the problem of the poor in the 1890s was characterised by a lack of fresh ideas or real radicalism. This was no doubt due at least in part to the lack of any leading Catholic figure of sufficient stature to fill the gap left by Cardinal Manning, who died in January 1892. Manning was radical not least in that he called into question the behaviour of the rich - as a body, not only as individuals - as much as the poor: criticising, for example, the reluctance of industrialists to place on record the amounts of their profits.

By contrast, the remarks made in the *Nineteenth Century* by the Christian Socialist Canon Barnett on wider society in the 1880s held true for the majority of Catholic thinking in the 1890s:

‘.... Generally it is assumed that the chief change is that to be effected in the habits of the poor. All sorts of missions and schemes exist for the working of this change. Perhaps it is more to the purpose that a change should be effected in the habits of the rich. Society has settled itself on a system which it never questions, and it is assumed to be absolutely within a man’s right to live where he chooses and to get the most for his money’.⁴¹¹

One of the chief Socialistic criticisms of *Rerum novarum*, as Doyle has shown,⁴¹² was that the Pope referred to ‘resignation’ on part of the workers and ‘generosity’ from the rich, when what Socialists demanded was justice rather than charity. Cardinal Manning often referred to ‘justice’ in this context, just as he frequently spoke of workers’ ‘rights’ - most famously, in his lecture in 1874 on ‘The Dignity and Rights of Labour’ - and it was perhaps the frequent use of these terms which more than anything else made him sound like a Socialist to his detractors. Dr Barry too, also widely perceived as a radical, wrote frequently of ‘social injustice’. In its ‘Literary Reviews’ section of April 1890, the *Month* referred to the debate over whether what the poor required was ‘mercy’ or ‘justice’ as ‘an

⁴¹¹ ‘Distress in East London’, *Nineteenth Century*, November 1886 (Quoted in Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p.67).

⁴¹² Doyle, (“Nothing New and Nothing True”), *op. cit.*, p.377

inevitable subject in all papers and periodicals' but in fact the Catholic writers did not themselves properly debate the question.⁴¹³ It was touched on, but rather than being considered in its wider aspect it became tied up with the semantic discussions over the *salaire familial*. This may have formed one of the reasons why Bishop Bagshawe's pamphlet of 1885 on 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor' received so lukewarm a reception in the Catholic press.⁴¹⁴ Bishop Bagshawe was very firm on the limits of charity and in his belief that the poor had not been given what was in justice owed to them. He shared Devas's opinions on the ideal relations between employer and employed but put them more strongly: that their employer should be 'like a good father of a family' was a labourer's right.⁴¹⁵ This pamphlet was in many senses too radical - and certainly, too strongly worded - for the taste of the journals. The *Month*, as has been seen above, carried a lengthy critique which attempted to refute many of his points.⁴¹⁶

The Catholic journals of this period never fully assimilated the idea that while they were thinking in terms of 'generosity' and 'charity' - maintaining a resolutely paternalistic approach to the problem of the poor - the working-classes, despite the lack of radicalism regretted by contemporary Socialists, were beginning to speak of 'rights' and 'justice'. Devas provided a useful outline of the most he felt that the working-classes could, and should, reasonably expect, under 'Christian democracy' - while steering clear of any mention of 'rights' - in his commentary for the *Dublin* on the Papal Encyclical *Graves de communi re*. The aim of 'Christian Democracy', he felt, was that the condition of the working-classes be made 'more endurable'; that they be gradually enabled to acquire the means of providing for the future; that 'within doors and without they may be enabled to fulfil unhindered their moral and religious duties; that they may feel themselves to be men and not cattle, to be Christians and not pagans'.⁴¹⁷

The limited impact on the Catholic debate of the Socialistic claim for 'justice' rather than 'mercy' for the workers is illustrated by the debate over emigration. As Stedman Jones has pointed out, there was no clear-cut ideological divide on the question of emigration: figures from Socialist and conservative camps alike saw emigration as one possible part of a

⁴¹³ *Month*, April 1890, p.600.

⁴¹⁴ Another reason may have been the Bishop's unpopularity with the journals, especially with the *Tablet*.

⁴¹⁵ Bagshawe, *op. cit.*, pp.13-17

⁴¹⁶ *Month*, April 1885, pp.582-585

solution for the problem of the poor.⁴¹⁸ The *Tablet* felt that emigration on a large-scale was vital because it acted both as a 'safety valve' for overcrowding at home while injecting 'new blood' into the British Empire. It was so important that emigration be organised efficiently and on a large scale that the *Tablet* was prepared to waive its usual qualms about state-intervention and support the Association for State-Directed Emigration and Colonisation; on the understanding that the Association looked to the State, not for funding, but for supervision so its schemes could be truly national.⁴¹⁹ The Churches became involved in running their own schemes: in the 1870s, Father Nugent in Liverpool and Father Thomas Seddon and Lord Archibald Douglas in Westminster led the way for the Catholic Church. As McClelland has shown, emigration seemed to offer, in particular, a solution to the over-crowding of Catholic institutions and to the problem of what to do with children when they grew too old to remain in them: while by concentrating on French-speaking Canada - especially, of course, the rural areas - the children could hope to enter a better 'moral quality of life'.⁴²⁰ In the diocese of Salford, the Catholic Children's Rescue Society founded by Bishop Vaughan in 1886 oversaw, between 1888 and 1908, the emigration of over 600 children to Canada; in 1905 a Catholic Emigration Association was created. In 1886 Cardinal Manning had declared his support for systematic and organised colonisation to the National Association for Promoting State-Directed Colonisation, and in 1887 he joined a deputation to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office to argue the case for organised, state-directed emigration:

'His Eminence regretted that "emigration" was always substituted for "colonization" in describing this scheme. We had not, he said, yet sounded the depths of poverty, but the condition of the poor was such that no voluntary aid would be sufficient. There must be Imperial aid to enable the population to go forth in organised societies'.⁴²¹

Organised emigration would not only increase the number of emigrants but would mean a better chance of the emigrants going where their labour was most needed and at the same time provide them with the comfort and support of a group. Manning had a keen interest in the colonies; dating, W.H. Kent has suggested, from his holding a subordinate post in the

⁴¹⁷ 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', pt. one, p.305

⁴¹⁸ Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, p.314.

⁴¹⁹ *Tablet*, 18/8/1883, p.244

⁴²⁰ V. Alan McClelland, 'The Making of Young Imperialists: Rev Thomas Seddon, Lord Archibald Douglas and the Resettling of British Catholic Orphans in Canada', p.512, in *Recusant History*, vol 19, 1989

Colonial Office after leaving Oxford. (Kent has also observed that in the same post Manning ‘devoted his attentions to questions of political economy, a study which stood him in good stead when in later years he took a prominent part in the practical discussion of social problems’).⁴²² In an article on ‘The English Exodus’ for the *Tablet*, Manning outlined the case for a controlled scheme state-directed emigration which would ‘aid the development of the colonies and of imperial commerce ... the consolidation of the empire by bonds and sympathies stronger than all federations’. Discussing why more people did not choose to emigrate, he spoke of one ‘very powerful’ reason,

‘If the people come to think that there exists in any quarter a desire to clean them off the face of their mother country, every instinct of manhood and of natural independence rises up to rivet them to the soil, in which they have an unalienable right to as much as will give them burial. We need not dwell on this point. It must be stated lest it should be forgotten, and when stated it will not be forgotten as a law of natural justice before which human laws must hold their peace’.⁴²³

It was just this a desire to ‘clean off’ the residuum to the colonies, leaving the skilled and respectable workers behind, which motivated many of the advocates of emigration. Manning’s objection to it, and his emphasis on the people’s rights, formed another demonstration of his radicalism, by the standards prevailing within and without his own Church. Talk of ‘justice’ and ‘rights’ was not general among Catholic writers of this period. A rare exception came with ‘The Social Difficulty’ by John S. Vaughan, in the *Dublin*. Little could be done to solve the problem of the poor, he argued, unless

‘... an intelligent view be taken of man’s social status, and unless his rights and privileges be recognised and admitted ... Men in power and authority wax eloquent when dilating upon the necessity of charity to the distressed ... they are even ready and anxious to loosen the purse-strings of the philanthropic ... [with] timely doles. This is all very well in its way, but it is no solution to the social question. The masses want justice, rather than an intermittent charity; and they will never be satisfied until they get it. They seek... a generous impartial recognition of their rights. No man who respects himself, cares to remain in the position of a permanent mendicant. Nor can we expect anyone to be over-grateful for the condescending gift of five or ten pounds from a creditor, who in strict equity owed him fifty or a hundred’.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 12/2/1887, p.238

⁴²² From the entry on ‘Cardinal Manning’ by W. H. Kent for the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1907-12), vol. 9.2, pp.604-608

⁴²³ *Tablet* 2/7/1887, p.25

⁴²⁴ ‘The Social Difficulty’, *Dublin*, October 1886, p.45

Fr Vaughan went on to argue that all were justified in demanding employment sufficient to obtain the means of supplying his basic needs: moreover, since the Creator had conferred life, not as a punishment, but as a privilege, it was ‘evidently his intention that man should enjoy life, and rejoice in his existence’. In a footnote he quoted Leo XIII’s remark in *Rerum Novarum* that remuneration must be enough ‘to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort’ but significantly, he emphasised not the frugality, but the comfort. He went on to argue for shorter hours in the mines and other dangerous trades, and for a graduated system of income tax to reduce the extremes of wealth and poverty. It was one of several examples in the journals of a thoroughly Manningite article appearing a few years after Manning’s death. Charles Gatty of the Catholic Social Union, someone else much influenced by Manning’s teaching, also pointed out - in the context of decent homes for poor girls: ‘... we know what they want, nay more, as long as people live in plenty and luxury we know what *they have a right to*’.⁴²⁵

There was another specific area in which Catholic debate might have been expected but in fact seemed oddly lacking. The Catholic Church had traditionally seen Socialism as a great enemy of ‘the family’ - *Rerum novarum* made special mention of this subject - but this threat was only touched on briefly and vaguely in the journals. Commenting on an article by the Reverend Henry Scott Holland on *Rerum novarum* in the October 1891 number of the *Economic Review*, (published by the Oxford University Branch of the Christian Social Union) the *Dublin* spoke of Scott Holland’s ideal government as:

‘This all-pervading all-embracing State, this Hegelian monster ... having as an inevitable consequence the trampling down of the rights of the family and the Church, and the profanation of our hearths and our altars ... No wonder, with this view of the State, Canon Holland finds the Pope’s view “somewhat thin”. No wonder also that he thinks the arguments in defence of private property in the Encyclical are inconclusive, because they rest in great part on the truth that the family has an independent sphere of its own, and that private ownership of the means of production is necessary for proper family life; whereas Canon Holland will not hear of the independence of the family’.⁴²⁶

The importance of the family was perhaps simply a *sine qua non*: the entire Catholic battle over education was based on the rights of the family versus those of the State. However,

⁴²⁵ *Tablet*, 31/3/1894, p.499. The italics are Gatty’s own.

⁴²⁶ From Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, January 1892, p.182; authorship doubtful, but probably Devas (see also footnote no. 209)

avoidance of this subject may also have formed a tacit admission of the writers' awareness of the long hours often worked by mothers outside the home under modern, urban capitalism. The perpetual exception, Cardinal Manning, had declared in his controversial letter to the Congress of Liège that the contract women made to their husbands and children took precedence over that made with their employers:

‘To put labour and wages first, and human or domestic life second, is to invert the order of God and of Nature, and to ruin the society of man at its foundation ... The economy of industry is governed by the supreme moral law, which checks, limits, and controls all its operations ... The prior and sacred contract of marriage forbids a second contract for money in violation of the first’.⁴²⁷

It may have been that - as Mayor has suggested of the Churches and the issue of unemployment - the Catholic writers found some aspects of modern capitalism simply too difficult to deal with.⁴²⁸ Nor was *Rerum novarum* of any help to them here; Leo XIII had simply remarked that some occupations were unfit for women, and that in general, if their work was at home, ‘there is better security for their modesty, for the comfort of their homes, for the care of their children’. In Devas’s idealised picture of a revitalised peasantry the problem would not arise, since women would work at home. However, the omissions were all the more marked because the early 1900s were to see great attention paid to the role and function of ‘motherhood’, as a result of concerns at the levels of physical debility found to be prevalent among army recruits for the South African Wars, coupled with anxiety about the high infant mortality and low birth rates.

Attitudes were even more slow to change among Catholics than among wider society. In the first and second decades of the next century, for example, Charles Plater laid more emphasis on what could be done to ‘cure’ the poor of their poverty rather than the weaknesses of the well-to-do, remarking that ‘Legislation could do little in the absence of moral stamina among a people’.⁴²⁹

There were, however, some green shoots of a new position slowly emerging. For the first time, there were signs - albeit few and far between - among the writers that they understood that the poor might be so not necessarily through individual imprudence or misfortune, but

⁴²⁷ Cardinal Manning to the Bishop-President of the Congress of Liège, 2/9/1890, ‘Letters’, p.17

⁴²⁸ Mayor, *op. cit.*, pp.137-138, 149

⁴²⁹ Quoted in Doyle, (‘Charles Plater SJ’), *op. cit.*, p.414

through economic and social forces outside their control. Devas dismissed the 'pious reflection' that we are to have the poor always with us, remarking, 'Nothing is more true, and nothing less to the purpose of our present disorder'.⁴³⁰ An anonymous reviewer in the *Tablet* of Lilly's *Characteristics of Henry Edward Manning*, went further, remarking that '... "The poor you have always with you", is a used and an abused quotation; but what if they are poor, not in spite of but by reason of us? It is no longer a question of charity but of justice, not of giving arms but of withholding rights.'⁴³¹ In his review in the *Month* of No 5, *John Street*, James Britten stressed the need to understand that the condition of the poor was 'a necessary consequence of the luxury - the unjustifiable luxury' of the rich.⁴³² In the *Tablet*, Mrs Crawford,⁴³³ discussing 'Impending Poor Law Reform', felt that old-age pensions, like the project of cottage-homes for the aged and for children, and a reversion to out-door relief, were in the direction of 'Christianizing' Poor Law administration. Having remarked that many were in the workhouse through circumstances over which they had no control - such as sickness and old-age - she went on to remark that there were still wider considerations too often forgotten: 'How many of these men and women who in the past have been branded as little better than semi-criminals, are the helpless victims of modern capitalism, and of the complicated conditions of the modern labour market?'.⁴³⁴

In the *Tablet* Fr Cuthbert remarked that 'A special duty of the Apostle of Modern Democracy is to bring healing and comfort to the victims of a ruthless industrial age'. He pointed out that the constant introduction of labour-saving machinery, and the ceaseless changes imposed on trades by the demands of fashion, were frequent causes of unemployment especially among the older workers. Significantly, he quoted Charles Booth's statement that 'under the existing industrial circumstances the ordinary labourer cannot put by for old age'.⁴³⁵

Despite such signs of changing attitudes, and greater awareness of the modern realities facing the working-classes, the main Catholic position on the problem of the poor remained

⁴³⁰ 'Work or Bread', p.305

⁴³¹ Quoted in the *Tablet's* review of *Characteristics of Henry Edward Manning*, 21/3/1885, p.448

⁴³² 'No. 5, *John Street*', p.501

⁴³³ Virginia M. Crawford, another convert, was received into the Church by Cardinal Manning in 1889 and encouraged by him to involve herself in social work. She was involved with the CTS and later with Charles Plater in the development of the Catholic Social Guild in 1909.

⁴³⁴ *Tablet*, 24/6/1899, p.979

⁴³⁵ 'The Conversion of Modern Democracy', p.499

unchanged. Catholic writers attacked the Socialists for their supposedly exaggerated belief in the 'perfectibility' of human nature - Devas's 'amazing assumption of virtue' - while themselves continuing to write as though the moral burden on the rich should be sufficient in itself to bring about change, never addressing the fact that it palpably was not. Fr John S. Vaughan wrote, in 'The Social Difficulty', of man's 'inborn selfishness and natural egotism', arguing that as long as self-interest was more powerful than the national and common interest, the wealthy and the powerful would refuse to join in any really effective movement inaugurated for the good of the people. Yet he went on to claim that as 'sentiments of Christian charity become more diffused among the prosperous classes' and the responsibility of riches and the dignity of labour become more fully realised, then the national assembly would 'awaken to a keener sense of its duty, and will proclaim by its united action, as well as by its united voice, the universal brotherhood and fellowship of man'.⁴³⁶

This was slightly softer and vaguer echo of A. J. Christie's remarks of ten years earlier that a national return to the Church was the 'only remedy' for the problem of the poor. The Catholic writers felt chiefly scorn for the efforts of the other churches, whose work, however well-meaning, was founded in error. The efforts of secular social workers were 'mere enthusiasm'. Socialism they perceived as being wrong both in its aims and in its conception of human nature. They had little confidence in the efficacy of social legislation, especially if brought in by an increasingly democratic legislature. However, they also felt themselves to be a small and almost powerless minority. In his lecture to the Catholic Young Men's Society on 'The Church and the Labourer', Abbot Snow acknowledged that 'however clear the teaching of the Church on the social problems may be, however anxious she may be to repeat in the present day her action in the past', the Church had not been able to cope with the magnitude of the problem. Even in Catholic countries she had no means of influencing the great companies, 'and she has little hope of directing individual capitalists, for the ramifications of commerce are intricate, and beyond her control'. Abbot Snow did not follow up this almost unique admission, but went on to speak of the merits and drawbacks of the trades union movement.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ 'The Social Difficulty', p.60

⁴³⁷ Reported in the *Tablet*, 10/12/1887, p.953

Here was perhaps the most glaring omission of the Catholic debate on the problem of the poor. The more Catholics reiterated that a real and lasting solution to the problem could only come with a return to the Faith, the more the onus would seem to be on them to try to bring this about. Yet there is no evidence in the journals that the 1890s saw the question of how Christian feelings could be 'diffused' among the prosperous being addressed, still less answered. On the problem of the poor the journals of the 1890s were preoccupied with two other issues: the significance of the 1891 Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and the state of religious observance among the Catholic poor.

Chapter 6

The impact of *Rerum novarum*: the reception of the most important Papal pronouncement on the problem of the poor

The Papal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, issued on 15 May 1891, has been greeted by contemporaries and by modern historians alike as the most significant Catholic document of this era on the social question. Indeed, in a leading article for the *Tablet*, Bishop Hedley went so far as to describe it as ‘probably the most important document of the present Pontificate’, a remark in itself an illustration of how important the problem of the working-classes had become for the Catholic writers.⁴³⁸ The *Tablet*, as was its custom with Papal Encyclicals, published the full document in its original Latin, (in two sections, 23/5/91-30/5/91) and also printed the official English translation (6/6/1891). The Encyclical was also printed in its entirety in Latin in the *Dublin Review* of July 1891, with an introductory article by Cardinal Manning. Known as *Rerum novarum* from its opening words, the Encyclical was also sometimes referred to as *De Conditione Opificum*. As the *Tablet* reported, while Cardinal Manning and Archbishop Walsh of Dublin had been ‘entrusted’ with making the English edition of the encyclical translation, the actual translation was made by the Bishop of Newport and Menevia (Bishop Cuthbert Hedley, one time editor of the *Dublin Review*) who was at that time staying in Rome.⁴³⁹

There was present in the journals a clear sense that a major Papal pronouncement on the condition of the working classes was very timely, if not overdue. The *Tablet*, announcing the incipient issue of an Encyclical on the social question in which ‘the question of property and its rights and duties, of labour, of the interference of the State, of the right of association, are all dealt with by a master hand’, remarked that the Social question was now ‘so widely discussed, and enters so deeply into the life of nations, and Christendom naturally turns to the Holy See for light and direction, it has become almost necessary for the Pope to address the Church very fully on the subject’.⁴⁴⁰ Any reader doubting the urgency of the question might have been further persuaded by the inclusion in the same

⁴³⁸ *Tablet*, 6/6/1891, p.885

⁴³⁹ *Tablet*, 30/5/1891, p.853

⁴⁴⁰ *Tablet*, 29/11/1890, p.851

issue of the *Tablet* of extracts from a controversial letter by Cardinal Manning, expounding his comments on the wages question to the Social Congress at Liège.⁴⁴¹

Rerum novarum was by no means Leo XIII's first pronouncement on socio-economic matters. In the first part of a commemorative article in the *Dublin* of January and April 1902, 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', Devas cited the Encyclicals *Quod Apostolici*, (December 1878), on Socialism; *Immortale Dei* (November 1885) on the Christian State; *Libertas Praestantissimum*, (June 1888), on Human Liberty; and *Sapientiae Christianae*, (January 1890), on the Chief Duties of Christian Citizens, together with the Address of October 30th 1889 to the French Workmen Pilgrims, the Encyclical *Graves de Communi Re* (January 1901) on Christian Democracy; and the Letter of July 10th 1895 to Cardinal Goussens and the Bishops of Belgium, as the key documents in the Pope's teaching on the social question.⁴⁴² All except the last two preceded *Rerum novarum*. Yet *Rerum novarum* was undeniably the most significant in pertaining directly to the condition of the workers, and it immediately became the subject of much commentary in both the Catholic and the non-Catholic press. The latter hailed the Encyclical unanimously as being inspired and shaped by the work of Cardinal Manning; while the former did not attempt to assess the extent to which Manning's ideas might have permeated the document. The *Tablet* did, however, report the remarks made by Cardinal's closest adherent on the social question, Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore, in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* soon after Manning's death:

'It was a day of triumph and of joy to Cardinal Manning when he read the magnificent Encyclical of the Holy Father on the Labour question, and found embodied and developed in that immortal document the principles of humanity for which, during his whole episcopal career, he had been strenuously contending'.⁴⁴³

Archbishop Gibbons was both accurate and precise when he said that the Encyclical embodied Manning's 'principles of humanity'. The *Anti-Jacobin*, in contrast, was very wide of the mark when it stated that 'The Pope's Encyclical will show that Cardinal Manning's policies have been adopted by the Church for every nation wherein it has a footing'. However far Manning's *principles* imbued *Rerum novarum* - and his influence is undeniable, as can be seen, for example, by a comparison of the Encyclical with Manning's

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.848-849.

⁴⁴² 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII' (part one), *Dublin*, April 1902, pp.293-294.

letter to the Social Congress at Liège the year before - it contained none of his 'policies'. *Rerum novarum* is a vague, incorporeal document, containing few practical recommendations or 'policies' at all. As the *Spectator* pointed out, the 'only counsel of perfection' it contained was that committees should be appointed by trades unions to arbitrate in employee-employer disputes, while the *Times* commented of the Encyclical that 'Clear, consistent, statesmanlike, are not epithets which we should venture to think applicable to it. Its higher praise is for the purpose for which it has been written and for the excellence of the moral rules which are to be found on almost every page'.⁴⁴⁴

In its illustrations and counsels the Encyclical, with its nostalgia for the old order and its singling out of the 'peasant proprietor' as the ideal economic model, far more closely mirrored the ideas and attitudes of Devas than those of Manning. This was not lost on Fr Herbert Lucas SJ, whose article on 'The Encyclical and the Economists' in the *Month* made no mention of Manning. Fr Lucas observed that

'the one Catholic economist of eminence whom we possess in England, Mr Devas, has some years since commended the work of reconstruction [of economic science] on lines identical with those now authoritatively traced for us by His Holiness'.⁴⁴⁵

(Fr Lucas added in a footnote to these comments the point that Devas's *Groundwork of Economics* had been intended as the first of several volumes, and expressed the hope that its author would be encouraged by *Rerum Novarum* to pursue 'his most useful labours'). The point on which Robert Blatchford and other Socialists centred their attacks on the Encyclical - its reliance on an increasingly archaic model of peasant proprietorship - was for Devas its strongest point. Looking back in 1902, Devas remarked of the Encyclical:

'Probably his [the Pope's] words are a strong support to what we call tenant-right and compensation for improvements; but certainly they suffice for the purpose in hand - an argument against Socialism. For the justification of small properties is the condemnation of the Socialists, who therefore minimise the importance of this kind of ownership, and treat it as an historical category, once useful, now antiquated ... but the progress of invention has belied their predictions, and by facilitating transmission of power to small workshops, and disclosing new treatments of the soil, both chemical and mechanical, modern science is becoming

⁴⁴³ Reported in the *Tablet*, 14/5/1892, p.779

⁴⁴⁴ *Tablet*, 6/6/1891, p.894

⁴⁴⁵ 'The Encyclical and the Economists', *Month*, July 1891, p.306

the friend of the small producer; while his weakness as buyer or seller has been met by the world-wide spread of co-operation'.⁴⁴⁶

The non-Catholic press considered that the mere appearance of an Encyclical on the condition of labour was in itself significant; and perhaps this was where its importance, and Manning's triumph, really lay. The translator of the Encyclical into English, Bishop Hedley, remarked in a leading article for the *Tablet*:

'The Labour Question is so wide, and its conditions are so various ... it is no wonder if the clergy and the intelligent laity have often hesitated how to act, not only in matters strictly practical, but also in those which stand midway between the great principles of Christian morality and actual work for the poor. For example, Catholics have been by no means enthusiastically agreed that the condition of the labouring masses was actually and admittedly so bad that serious efforts were required from persons of every degree to prevent a catastrophe. Some of us have doubted whether it was wise to speak out plainly on the rights of the poor; to say that every man has the right to food and shelter, a right to marry and bring up a family, and a right to combine. No-one questioned the abstract truth of these principles; but whether it was wise to insist on them was another thing'.⁴⁴⁷

Manning struck a similar note in his own article on the Encyclical for the *Dublin Review*:

'For a century the Civil Powers in almost all the Christian World have been separating themselves from the Church, claiming, and glorifying in their separating ... And now of a sudden they find that the millions of the world sympathise with the Church, which has compassion on the multitude rather than with the State or the plutocracy which had weighed so heavily upon them'.⁴⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that one of Manning's biographers, Shane Leslie, has suggested that without Manning's influence, the wording of *Rerum novarum* might have been even more vague. Leslie felt that the Encyclical was 'impartially translated' because Hedley took a conservative, and Manning a progressive, view: Manning, for example, insisted on the use of the word 'strike' rather than a euphemism.⁴⁴⁹

The Bishop of Newport and Menevia had gone on to claim that the Encyclical was: 'a text, or a programme, which will have the effect of giving uniformity to the views or the efforts' of the Catholic laity and clergy, but added, 'It would be a mistake to expect from the Holy

⁴⁴⁶ 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', *Dublin*, pt. two, p.299

⁴⁴⁷ *Tablet*, 6/6/1891, p.885

⁴⁴⁸ 'Leo XIII on "The Condition of Labour"', p.167

⁴⁴⁹ Shane Leslie, *Henry Edward Manning: His Life and Labours* (1921), p.380

Father the solution of the more practical questions of the hour ...' in the 'wonderfully clear principles which will serve as a guide to those whose business it is to enter into details'. This was the line on the Encyclical to which most Catholic writers clung: they sought at once both to play down, and yet to defend, the Encyclical's vagueness and the lack of tangible examples or illustrations of its 'principles'. Manning was as usual the exception, feeling, for example, that one immediate application of *Rerum novarum* was obvious: England should at once honour its agreement, made at the Congress of Berlin, to raise the minimum age of child labour: 'The words of Leo XIII will sear us till we raise it at least to twelve'.⁴⁵⁰ Devas both acknowledged and welcomed the Encyclical's lack of the specific. He always objected to absolute systems or solutions, on intellectual as well as religious grounds, and he pointed out that *Rerum novarum* was aimed, not at England alone, but at the entire Catholic communion. In his review of *Socialismo e Catholicismo*, an Italian commentary on the Encyclical, he observed that remedies must be suited to populations and places.⁴⁵¹ He used the same argument to meet the protests of many English Socialists - including members of Henry Scott Holland's Christian Social Union - that they could not recognise themselves from the picture drawn by the Pope of Socialists in the Encyclicals of 1878, 1891, and 1901:

'... the point is, whom the picture was intended to represent; and if they studied the aims and practices of the Socialists where they are face to face with Catholic populations, eg their shameful attacks on religion in Milan, the papal condemnations would appear just and opportune'.⁴⁵²

The *Dublin* of October 1891, in a review of *The Economic Journal* (published by the Oxford University Branch of the Christian Social Union) commented on the criticisms of the Encyclical which came from the ultra-practical Canon Scott Holland:

'... he gives us plainly to understand that the Pope's teaching, though very well-meaning, is of very little use; "that we have not gained any clear step; that we are not further forward on our way; that our real problems have only been skirted, not assailed; that after all the old man, in his goodness, has said we must go back and work out the weary heart of the problem for ourselves"'.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ 'Leo XIII on "The Condition of Labour"', p.167

⁴⁵¹ *Socialism and Catholicism* from the Italian of Count Edward Soderini trans by Richard Jenery-Shee. With a preface by his eminence Cardinal Vaughan (1896). Reviewed in Notices of Books, *Dublin*, April 1897, pp.479-482

⁴⁵² 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', pt.2, footnote to pp.11-12

The *Tablet*'s reviewer claimed that these views were misrepresentative and that much of the Encyclical determined 'very explicitly' the limitations of ownership and the checks on its abuse, stated that the duty of the Government was to protect all rights, not merely those of property, and declared that the 'inviolability of private property' if meaning that every man could do what he liked with his own, was contradictory to Christian teaching. This would not have gone very far towards meeting Canon Holland's criticisms. So fluid a commodity was the Encyclical that a French priest, Fr Auguste Onclair, in his *Le Clergé et la Question Sociale par le dr Scheicher, examen Critique* (Paris, 1898) was, as a condemnatory reviewer remarked, mistaken enough to 'attempt to wrest the encyclical' into 'a text for Socialistic teaching'.⁴⁵⁴ while Devas took to task an economist who had concluded (in the *Economic Review*, October 1901) that the Pope 'identifies justice with the present distribution of property'.⁴⁵⁵ Significantly even Devas commented that while the Encyclical was the most important of Leo XIII's pronouncements on the social question, after its publication '... the work remained of explaining what had been taught and of removing misunderstandings'. This, however, he felt had been achieved with the Pope's later letters and the 1901 Encyclical *Graves de communi re*. Commenting on Professor Nitti's *Il Socialismo Cattolico*, Devas remarked:

'... the Encyclical of May 1891 was a central point to which the previous social movement among Catholics had led up, and from which our present social movement proceeds; our works now are the putting into effect the counsels of the Papal letter; our writings are commentaries on it; our controversies relate to its interpretation'.⁴⁵⁶

This was only too true. While the Encyclical had served to give a considerable boost in morale to Catholics working or writing on the social question, conferring Papal approval on their efforts, in another sense it had an adverse effect. The Encyclical, which Devas perceived as usefully focusing the discussion on the social question, in fact served to contract and curtail the limits of the debate in England. The Catholic writers answered the charges of vagueness by saying that the Encyclical was never intended to be the last word on the subject; and yet at the same time, this was how they treated it. Rather than spurring them on to social action or to examining the wider picture, the Catholic writers become

⁴⁵³ Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, October 1891, pp.180-183

⁴⁵⁴ Notices of Books, *Dublin*, April 1899, p.468

⁴⁵⁵ 'The Political Economy of Leo VIII', pt. one, p.309

⁴⁵⁶ "'Catholic Socialism'", p.119

mired in debate over its exact meaning. An excerpt from Devas's own writing gives a flavour of this:

'.... a short explanation is perhaps needed of the controversy on the meaning of the Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, whether the minimum fair wage must be sufficient to support, the frugal workman by himself, or must be sufficient to support also his wife and children. The context of the passage and the general stress laid on family life in the previous teaching of Leo XIII seemed to indicate the second alternative, often called the *salaire familial* ... But then it was rashly concluded that individual employers were bound by strict justice (*justicia commutativa*), involving the duty of restitution, to pay such wages. Further reasoning, however, and the reply of Cardinal Zigliara to the Archbishop of Mechlin, showed that the strict duty of the employer was only to pay a wage sufficient for the support of the men he employed, though it might be a duty of charity to pay them more. Yet the *salaire familial* was by no means a mere matter of charity: justice cried aloud that the workman must receive enough for wife and children. But then the justice was not commutative but distributive. This means that the workman who is paid enough for himself but not enough for his family, is the victim not of individual injustice but, in Cardinal Manning's phrase, of social injustice; and that it is the business of the State to intervene and do its best, the best often being done by indirect means, to secure for all the poorer classes the possibilities of a decent family life'.⁴⁵⁷

Here were fresh examples of both the tendency of the Catholic writers to become embroiled in detailed discussions on semantics, and of the way in which Devas, despite his own best efforts to avoid it, was constantly brought up against the need for social legislation. It should also be noted that in the discussions over the *salaire familial* as elsewhere, it was always assumed that while men might need a wage sufficient to support a family, a woman would only need enough to support herself, whereas in fact thousands of women were supporting families. This was an error by no means confined to the Catholic writers,⁴⁵⁸ but it was in keeping with their habitual over-simplification of the problem of the poor.

The concentration on *Rerum novarum*, together with the death of Cardinal Manning, contributed to the stagnation of the social debate in the 1890s. This is most clearly noticeable in the *Tablet*: after 1891, while there was as much reporting on strikes and other specific activities as before, there were fewer 'broad-brush' articles or reviews on the wider social question. The debate on the social question continued after 1891, as can be

⁴⁵⁷ 'The Political Economy of Leo XIII', pt. one, pp.311-312

⁴⁵⁸ It was an assumption still being made in 1913, as the Fabian, Maud Pember Reeves, observed in her *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913), p.136

witnessed by the programmes of the annual Catholic Conferences, but the decade was marked by an increasing readiness to borrow from others rather than by uniquely Catholic input. As late as 1898, Fr Rickaby felt the need to protest of *Rerum novarum*, 'The Encyclical is not meant to relieve Christian defenders of order from all trouble of further thinking' and that 'it is left to them to complete and adapt the general principles which His Holiness supplies; and this is what we are endeavouring to do'.⁴⁵⁹

The developments over this period in the ideas of Fr Joseph Rickaby, set out in a series of articles for the *Month*, are illuminating.⁴⁶⁰ Fr Rickaby was second only to Devas in dominating the social question in the *Month* during this period. While he made a close study of Socialism, as a Jesuit and philosopher - he was Professor of Ethics and Social Law at Stonyhurst College - his practical knowledge of the working-classes was necessarily limited. Always essentially conservative in his approach, and maintaining great hopes for 'multiplying capitalists' through the spread of the more acceptable forms of co-operation to supplement wages, the 1890s nonetheless witnessed important developments in his thinking. In 'The Great Clothes Question' for the *Month* of October 1889 he had discussed possible ways of persuading into church those so poor that they were too ashamed of their rags to attend; considering various tactics - even separate altars for rich and poor, as in Ireland - without once touching on the question of how the poor might come to be better clothed. It was an article which might have fitted very easily into a journal of the 1850s. Yet in 1898 his 'Commentary on the Encyclical Letter of May 15, 1891 on the Condition of the Working Classes'⁴⁶¹ marked the first clear admission that *Rerum novarum* could not only not serve as a practical guide but was not the last word on the social question, even for its own time. Indeed, despite its first line - 'The opening words of the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* (revolutionary change) show the Apostolic See awake to the changing times', the entire essay formed an attempt to bring the Encyclical up to date.⁴⁶² In particular, Fr Rickaby acknowledged that the Pope's example of the peasant proprietor was not

⁴⁵⁹ 'Commentary Pt. 1', p.369

⁴⁶⁰ Fr Rickaby's articles on the social question in the *Month* were: Sept 1886 - 'Usury'; Oct 1889 - 'The Great Clothes Question'; Jan 1898 - 'Some difficulties of Socialism'; Feb 1898 - 'Three Socialist Fallacies'; March 1898 - 'Socialism and Religious Orders'; April 1898 - 'A Commentary on the Encyclical Letter of May 15, 1891 on the Condition of the Working Classes, Pt. I', and May 1898, 'Pt. II'. His 'Socialism: a Tract for the Times' was reviewed in *Month*, Sept 1885. (His surname is spelt variously throughout the journals as "Rickerby", "Rickarby" and "Rickaby". The latter is the correct spelling, it has been used here throughout).

⁴⁶¹ *Month*, in two parts, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶² 'Commentary Pt. 1', p.368

especially useful in the England of the 1890s; the first clear English Catholic statement of this, though there had been remarks to the same effect on the continent, not least from Professor Nitti. Remarking that the Pope had presumably been thinking more of the position in Italy, Ireland and America in his emphasis in securing for the people a share in the land, Fr Rickaby commented wryly:

‘We fancy there is not much “earth-hunger” among the working population in our large towns in England. They would sell the “three acres”, and not know what to do with the “cow”’.⁴⁶³

He went on to observe that the important question of the unemployed had not been touched on in *Rerum novarum*. By this time Fr Rickaby had progressed from his somewhat superficial discussion of ‘The Great Clothes Question’ to a more profound understanding of how far the masses had gone from the reach of religion. Here was not a class of people who chose to neglect their religious duties to wallow in drink, or to be led astray by the specious attractions of Socialism. Matters, it must be faced, had gone deeper still:

‘Scion of a Catholic stock, it seems impossible for Leo XIII to realise the intense paganism, or animalism rather, of our working people. They are not hostile to religion, not impious, not blasphemers, but simply live, and to all appearance die, like the dumb animals, out of the religious sphere’.⁴⁶⁴

This important admission reflected a new awareness of the realities of working-class existence, which was the result, at least in part, of the sometimes heated debate of the 1890s on whether or not an improvement to the material surroundings of the poor was a prerequisite for their return to a moral and religious manner of living: the debate, in short, over ‘Civilization and Christianization’.

⁴⁶³ Commentary Pt. 2, p.488

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.483

Chapter 7

Mr Britten, Dr Barry and 'Civilization or Christianization': the debate on the duty to the poor of the Catholic laity

The Catholic writers were, as has been seen, deeply wary of the concept of social legislation imposed by the State and almost equally unenthusiastic about the efforts of other bodies in the field of social welfare. They were wont to regard the Church as the originator of all great reforms of society and her members as experts in the day to day practice of charity: the traditional ideal of Catholic charity (epitomised by the Vaughan children, with their discreet visits to the sick and needy) - personal, individual, and private. Moreover, charity was in the Catholic view so much bound up with religion that they had the greatest difficulty, not only in believing that 'philanthropy' or 'altruism' which was not driven by religious feeling and guided by the Church could be effective; but even that it could really exist, except as an affectation or a passing fad. A reviewer in the *Tablet* of Daniel Thompson's *Social Progress: An Essay* (1889)⁴⁶⁵ commented that 'Selfishness is at the bottom of everything that the non-religious man does'. In a brief review of Mrs Humphry Ward's best-selling *Robert Elsmere*, the *Dublin* observed that the novel chronicled '... the downward process from faith to mere enthusiasm'.⁴⁶⁶ 'Mere enthusiasm', usually short-lived and often misguided, was the best to be expected from social reformers outside the Church. There was no apparent recognition of the existence of a generation who, having grown up in religious homes, had lost their faith but retained the tradition and ideal of public service. A particular distrust was reserved for those who spoke of a sense of 'brotherhood' with the working-classes; this smacked of irreligion and advanced democratic ideas. Professor St George Mivart observed:

'It is not reasonable or right even to seek to regard all men as "our brothers". That, in a certain very wide sense, "all men are brothers", could not be denied by any consistent evolutionist. That, in another sense, "all men are brothers", must be maintained by every Christian - nay, even by every Theist. It is also manifestly most expedient that the value of brotherly kindness should be everywhere recognized ... Nevertheless ... It is certainly our nearest blood-relations who ordinarily have the highest claims on our good offices ... It is only out of the natural and instinctive love of family, home, country, and nation, that can be developed a healthy and practical love for all men, as opposed to a sickly

⁴⁶⁵ Reviewed in the *Tablet*, 22/6/1889, p.970

⁴⁶⁶ *Dublin*, April 1888, p.427

sentimentality, leading to the neglect of home duties without increased beneficent action in a wider sphere'.⁴⁶⁷

If the problem of the poor - by now generally admitted to be pressing - was not to be ameliorated by legislation or by the efforts of philanthropic groups or individuals, it would therefore seem to follow that Catholics must do the work themselves. Yet Cardinal Manning's continual exhortations to the laity to exert themselves in serious, practical, sustained charitable endeavour - rather than to content themselves with occasional charity bazaars and the like - were felt to be unreasonable. Remaining conscious of their status as a small group within English society, the Catholic laity felt that he expected too much from them. That his remarks still rankled ten years after his death can be seen from an anonymous review in the *Month* of *Come and See: A Record of Faith Found in London*, a fable published (anonymously) by Wilfrid Meynell in 1902, which examined Catholic social work in London. Like the Socialists William Morris (with *News from Nowhere*) and Bellamy (with *Looking Backward*), Meynell here used the long-established device of introducing an outsider into a society the better to demonstrate its ideals.⁴⁶⁸ The reviewer commented:

'Cardinal Manning, as we well remember, used in his old age to lament that his flock were so lethargic. They ought, under the stimulus of their faith and its spiritual power, to be the leaders in the various beneficent movements of the time for elevating their poorer brethren from the deplorable conditions into which the present social system has reduced them. And yet it was just the other way. The Catholics were the least represented of all among the workers of London, and even the more religious-minded of their number were occupied with Confraternity meetings, and the sentimental devotions of the Faubourg St Germain, and had only deaf ears for the mighty cry of distress uttered by multitudes ...'.

The anonymous reviewer felt that if the Cardinal had taken a wider view, he might have realised that the sentimental devotions had helped to fill the convents in charge of Catholic charitable institutions and in inspiring those lay workers who were active. He went on:

'And if the number of these was small, was sufficient allowance made for the serious obstacles which might stand in the way of others who, if free would gladly answer to their Bishop's call - want of health, want of capacity for the work,

⁴⁶⁷ 'On Catholic Politics', p.5.

⁴⁶⁸ *Come and See: A Record of Faith found in London* was published by Burns & Oates in 1902. It was subtitled: 'Being a Relation of the Adventures of Count Marco Caradori who came hither for the Coronation of Edward VII and in Babylondon discovered instead His Own Spiritual Crown. Wherein also are set down Certain Strait Sayings of the Eminent Servant of God Cardinal Manning'.

pressing home occupations, the wishes of parents, perhaps of non-Catholic parents, to whose feelings deference must be paid, the need of bodily relaxation after a hard day's work in the city, and above all the enormous distances which have to be dealt with in a city like London: when hindrances such as these are allowed for, it may be questioned whether the number is very large of the Catholics who could be available if they would for the work which sadly needs to be done - of course excepting those on whose selfish hearts neither the claims of the poor nor the devotions of the Faubourg St Germain are likely to make any impression'.⁴⁶⁹

Some of this sounded very much like special pleading. So too did Fr Clarke's remarks on General Booth's *Darkest England and the Way Out* for the *Month*. After praising the Salvationists' work and their zeal, and commenting, '.... We can scarcely imagine the sleek dignitaries of Anglicanism doing the work', he remarked that the paucity of Catholics in a Protestant country, and 'the primary importance of ministering to those who are the children of the Church' prevented any attempt at wide-spread missionary activity. It was impossible for those 'who are but one here and one there, and who are still but recently escaped from centuries of prosecution and oppression', to be 'aggressive' on any large scale.⁴⁷⁰ Yet if the Catholics were working under a disadvantage, then surely the Salvation Army, newly formed (and in many eyes not even respectable) was still more so.⁴⁷¹

Moreover, both writers went on to remark that the overly-democratic Salvation Army must ultimately fail, lacking as it did the perfect organisation of the Catholic Church. They seemed unaware of any apparent contradiction in these remarks. Nor did they seem to take into account the extraordinary impact individuals could make in their own localities, as, for example, James Lister made in Halifax.⁴⁷² While over-reliance on one or two moving spirits carried its own problems - as is witnessed by the decline in the Salford Protection and Rescue Society after Vaughan and his right-hand man, Austin Oates,⁴⁷³ had departed for Westminster - the fact that individuals could be seen to make such a difference left defences based on paucity of numbers looking rather weak. Instances of such special pleading continued: as late as 1895, a writer for the *Month* on 'One Aspect of the Catholic Social Union' remarked that when the Catholic Social Union had been begun less than two years before, it had:

⁴⁶⁹ Reviews, *Month*, December 1902, pp.649-651

⁴⁷⁰ 'The Salvation Army and Darkest England', *Month*, December 1890, pp.466-469

⁴⁷¹ The Salvation Army had been founded in 1865 and at first had confined itself to direct evangelisation, soon widening its scope to include social work.

⁴⁷² Patrick J. Doyle, 'Catholics and the Social Question', in *London Recusant*, vol 3, 1973, pp.68

⁴⁷³ Austin Oates KSG was a member of the publishing family. He was secretary to Bishop Vaughan at Salford and worked closely with him at the Salford Protection and Rescue Society, founded by Vaughan

‘... opened out a field of labour to many devoted souls who were only waiting an opportunity to concentrate their energies into practical work for God, and it has developed possibilities of spiritual usefulness in many others who were leading lives of frivolity and indolence merely because they had nothing better to do’.⁴⁷⁴

Leo XIII certainly looked to the laity for more social effort: indeed, the *Tablet* remarked of the Papal Encyclical *Immortale Dei* - in its reception of which the *Tablet* was unusually lukewarm - that ‘No Pope has ever spoken so strongly to the “lazy” Catholics’.⁴⁷⁵ Devas consistently deplored the apathy of the laity. Reviewing the opening number of the *Economic Review*, he commented that while ‘No doubt the Christianity seems to us somewhat weak-kneed and confused’, ‘considering the state of economic science and social activity among Catholics, it is certainly not for us to throw stones’.⁴⁷⁶ In one of those occasional remarks which seemed in conflict with his usual optimism on the state of the debate on the social question among Catholics, he went on to add that he suspected that *Rerum novarum* was receiving more serious attention from this quarter than it was from Catholics. In a letter in the *Tablet* (9/8/1890) Mr James Herrington, appealing for lay help with Sunday Schools, remarked that there was a false impression prevalent among laymen that everything must be done by the Priest. ‘Surely, sir’ he wrote, ‘this idea cannot have originated with the clergy, or be fostered by them’.⁴⁷⁷ In fact lay involvement was not always received with enthusiasm, a fact born out by the not infrequent clashes between lay social workers and the clergy revealed in the *Tablet*’s correspondence pages.

(ii)

The reluctance of the parish clergy to accept lay help even when it was offered was a point touched on by James Britten in his ‘The Work of the Laity’. Published in the *Dublin* of July 1887, this was one of the most important Catholic documents of this era on the social question. Britten was the best-known and most vociferous lay Catholic social worker in England. He shared Cardinal Manning’s views on the need for committed and concerted

in 1886. He received a papal knighthood (OSG) in recognition of this work. He moved to Westminster when Vaughan was made Archbishop, and became the first Hon. Secretary of the Catholic Social Union.

⁴⁷⁴ ‘One Aspect of the Catholic Social Union’, p.323

⁴⁷⁵ *Tablet*, 16/1/1886, p.101

⁴⁷⁶ Notes on Social Science, *Dublin*, January 1892, p.179

⁴⁷⁷ *Tablet*, 9/8/1890, p.222

social action by the laity and incurred his share of the hostility with which this approach was greeted in some quarters. Like the Cardinal and like many of the most active Catholic social workers, Britten was a convert. He worked as an Assistant in the Botanical Department of the British Museum throughout this period, but found time to be actively involved in almost all of the new or revitalised Catholic social enterprises of the 1880s and 1890s. He was one of two Honorary Secretaries of the Catholic Truth Society when it was revived by Bishop Vaughan in 1884. He inaugurated the Society's Annual Catholic Conferences (which ran for seventeen years until merging with the National Catholic Congress in 1910), and for several years reported on them in the *Month*. He also contributed various articles to the *Month* on the social question and was a tireless worker and campaigner for the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the League of the Cross, the Catholic Needlework Guild, the Church Library Association and Catholic Boys' Clubs and Young Men's Societies⁴⁷⁸. His involvement in the Kyrle Society included membership of its editorial sub-committee for pamphlets, where he would have brought his experience at the CTS to bear. (This might be seen as a rare example of a secular charitable society learning from a Catholic one, were it not for the fact that Britten acknowledged his own borrowing of ideas for the CTS from the Protestant Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge'). In 1897 his social work was acknowledged by a papal knighthood.

In 'The Work of the Laity' Britten set out what was in effect his personal manifesto for Catholic social work to suit the changing times. His remarks were often controversial and frequently unpopular, but it can be seen that almost all of his recommendations became accepted Catholic practice during the 1890s. He began by accusing the laity of complacency and apathy, pointing, for evidence, to the tiny membership of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP). The SVP, founded in Paris by Frédéric Ozanam to ameliorate the adverse effects of industrialisation, and to counter the efforts of the socialistic Saint-Simonian movement, had been introduced to England in 1844. Britten cited a total membership in England of 1,958, 'of whom 1,204 are active and the remainder honorary',

⁴⁷⁸ Britten's articles in the *Month* during the period under consideration included: 'Catholic Clubs' (October 1885); 'The Church and the People' (October 1886); 'Catholic Lending Libraries' (February 1886); 'Catholic Popular Literature' (May 1886); 'The Loss of Our Boys' (April 1887) 'The Loss of Our Girls' (May 1887); 'The Recent Catholic Conference' (August 1891); 'The Catholic Conference of 1894' (October 1894); 'Catholic Progress in England' (2 parts, July and August 1899); 'Our Boys' (May 1899); 'No 5, John Street' (November 1899); 'Realities at Home' (April 1902); 'Boy-Savers', (two parts, October and November 1902); 'Catholics and the Press', (December 1902). 'The Work of the Laity' (July 1887) formed one of his rare appearances in the *Dublin*.

while only 102 missions had an active conference, a falling-off from earlier years.⁴⁷⁹ Britten, in pointing to its tiny membership of the 'SVP', was making a telling point, because the Society, aiming as it did to bring the two opposing camps of rich and poor together, epitomised the Catholic writers' ideal of social effort and therefore might expect to be well supported.

Britten pleaded for a massive extension of current lay efforts to initiate or extend social clubs, the Catholic Young Men's Society, and especially the SVP. He drew attention to Bishop Vaughan's proposals for the establishment of Catholic homes for destitute children, night shelters, refuges, industrial or certified schools; clubs for boys and girls in service; schemes of emigration for Catholic children; and systematic co-operation with confraternities and other parochial societies to provide home visits, vigilance over school attendance, contact with children after they have left school, amusements, cheap Catholic literature and 'friendly intercourse and sympathy'. Importantly, he argued for both the better organisation of Catholic efforts and for closer links with non-Catholic philanthropic bodies.

'It has lately been suggested that much could be done by the establishment of parochial councils, to be formed, of course, with the sanction of the priest, and to work under him, which could take up and organize lay work of different kinds. Such councils would not confine themselves to merely social work; they would aim at organizing the Catholics of their mission into a compact body, which would be available for voting purposes in all parochial matters'.⁴⁸⁰

These would be of especial use in the field of education; by these means Catholic children currently in Board Schools could be identified and removed. By the same means, links might be forged with the Charity Organization Society (COS), the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, the Reformatory and Refuge Union, and the like. Although by the time certain figures - like Father Nugent in Liverpool and James Lister in Halifax - had been quietly co-operating with, and learning from, non-Catholic social effort for years, the issue of whether or not Catholics should work with non-Catholic social bodies was still a controversial one. Still more controversial were Britten's views on the need for 'brightening the homes of the lives of the poor' by working with such agencies as the Metropolitan Playgrounds

⁴⁷⁹ 'The Work of the Laity', *Dublin*, July 1887, p.159

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.162

Association, the Society for Preserving Open Spaces, and the Kyrle Society. Britten also saw a need for a series of pamphlets on practical matters, including thrift, banks and benefit societies, 'self-culture' and 'the importance of combination'. Here, Britten suggested that the Catholic Truth Society could learn from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, who already produced leaflets on social matters suitable for general distribution. He added, 'It is well that some of us should take the trouble to become acquainted with the modes of working adopted by non-Catholic organizations'.⁴⁸¹ Britten realised that some would be shocked by this but he felt that it was a practical way forward. He himself had, as he pointed out, borrowed from Lady Wolverton her idea of a 'Needlework Guild' and had obtained approval from the Bishop of Southwark to start a Catholic one in his diocese. Britten went further still, speaking of the successful work of the Christian Socialists and the desirability of establishing in London some Catholic centre which would undertake 'such educational work as is carried on with admirable zeal and devotion, and, it is gratifying to add, with proportionate success, at Toynbee Hall and elsewhere'. The priests could not do all these things: obviously, the work would have to be done by the laity. Britten remarked, 'These things can be done, and are done, by those who are not Catholics. Are our duties to the poor less, because our privileges are greater?'.⁴⁸²

Britten, in stressing the need for 'organisation' and urging Catholics to co-operate with bodies outside the Church, was in advance of most Catholic thinking in the 1880s. His comparatively advanced attitudes were also illustrated in his remarks on 'patronage work' of the SVP:

'... Almost every kind of work among boys and young men can be brought under this designation, which is, in my opinion, both unsuitable and ill-chosen. It has been taken from the French language, in which it "implies" - so says the Report - "the affectionate relations which exist between a Brother of St Vincent de Paul, of a kind Christian master and his apprentice" (the English is doubtful, but the meaning is clear). This would have been all very well if the word Patronage had not already had a recognized meaning in English - and that one entirely opposed to the spirit which should animate the Brother of St Vincent de Paul ... There is just that assumption that boys are like pieces on a chessboard, and will stay where you put them, that is at the bottom of countless failures in work of this kind'.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.164

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.165-6

Britten went on to point out that some clubs tried to enforce the rule under which boys were instantly expelled for swearing, an idea he called ‘nonsensical’ for English and Irish boys. With these ideas, and his reproaches to the laity, Britten’s ideas were not calculated to win him popularity with the Catholic periodicals, least of all with the *Tablet*. Moreover, he had begun the essay by referring to the publication two years earlier of a pamphlet called ‘The Catholic Church and the People’ which Britten saw as having shattered Catholic complacency on the condition of the Church among the working people of England. (At the time of publication, Britten wrote, speculation had named him as the possible author; he denied it). For this reason, Britten felt, the pamphlet would have been ignored had not Bishop Vaughan taken up the cause, with the result that, ‘The *Tablet* and the *Weekly Register* vied with each other in their expressions of horror at the state of things revealed, and in the warmth of their appeals to Catholics to come forward and help to stay the leak’.⁴⁸⁴ The *Tablet* had by now lost its earlier, somewhat combative, style and usually maintained a courteous and dignified tone, but James Britten was one of several people who could still bring out its worst side.⁴⁸⁵ Here it responded swiftly to Britten’s attack with some cutting remarks including a sneering comment at his paid employment,⁴⁸⁶ a comment all the more ill-judged as Britten was well known for the amount of time and money he devoted to charitable causes. (The *Tablet* itself, for example, had reported Cardinal Manning’s commendation of Britten for spending his own time and money on the magazine of the League of the Cross).⁴⁸⁷ A week later, while continuing to deny that it had purposely ignored the pamphlet, the *Tablet* was moved to apologise, the Editor remarking;

‘In our astonishment at the nature of Mr Britten’s accusations we confess we wrote with warmth. That, however, is not how people ought to write; we withdraw our words unreservedly, and we offer our apology to Mr Britten’.⁴⁸⁸

The quarrel between Britten and the *Tablet* rumbled on for some while. Even before the publication of ‘The Work of the Laity’ his views had been controversial, not least because he advocated measures more usually associated with the Nonconformists, such as the

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.160

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.152-153

⁴⁸⁵ John Ruskin in his later years, and the leading lights of the anti-vivisection movement (with which Cardinal Manning was associated), were also among those who came in for some rather heavy-handed satire during the period under consideration.

⁴⁸⁶ *Tablet*, 30/7/1887, p.167

⁴⁸⁷ *Tablet*, 3/4/1886, p.551

⁴⁸⁸ *Tablet*, 13/8/1887, p.256

provision of open-air services and the abolition of pew rents, to help bring the poor back to the Church. Later he accused the journal of being hostile to the interests of the CTS, while for its part the *Tablet* felt that the CTS was in danger of usurping the role of the Catholic Union. Later, however, the *Tablet*'s attitude to Britten began to soften; perhaps, in part at least, because his emphasis on the need for large-scale lay involvement became orthodoxy.

In 'The Work of the Laity', Britten had gone on to discuss a book issued a few years before, entitled *John Brown, Working-man*. In this a Catholic member of the working-classes had remarked of Catholic charity:

'... the convents are very good for the poor, but sure the Sisters care nothing for us ourselves. They've got their eyes fixed on a great crown of glory, and they use their charity to the poor as one of the biggest stepping-stones to it. The priests are the same; they never try to make us happier here ... They never try to civilize us. It's always the same story with them'.⁴⁸⁹

Britten himself remarked that while he did not endorse such comments, they gave food for thought. They certainly make for interesting comparison with Devas's remarks on 'ragged dwellers in hovels and huts behaving like gentlemen', in the *Dublin Review* just nine months before. Britten himself had whole-heartedly accepted the idea that in order to bring the masses back to the Church, something must first be done to improve their material surroundings and to 'civilize' their lives: not only as a good deed in itself, but as a means to an end, but because a 'civilized' people would be more likely, and more able, to lead religious lives. Britten had remarked:

'I am sorry to occupy space by saying that I do not confound civilization with religion ; but it is so important to guard against misunderstanding that protests of this kind are perhaps needful. ... "Our business is not to teach people to admire art, but to save their souls" another priest said lately. This of course is true; and if it is a choice between the two art must go to the wall'.⁴⁹⁰

The 'civilization and Christianization' debate was not over whether it was more important that a man be saved than he be fed - for a Catholic there could only be one answer on that question - but whether his being fed was in itself a good thing, or whether hunger might aid his salvation. Did life in an overcrowded urban slum mean the poor were all the more

⁴⁸⁹ 'The Work of the Laity', p.159

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.155

likely to turn to their faith in a better world to come, or make it almost impossible for them to adhere to that faith?

James Britten and Wilfrid and Alice Meynell were all firmly on the 'civilization' side of the debate. All three had been greatly influenced by the teachings of Cardinal Manning and shared his willingness to learn from, and work with, non-Catholic charitable societies. Significantly, all three became active members of the Kyrle Society. Founded in 1877, the Society was named after the eighteenth-century philanthropist John Kyrle who, rather than content himself with traditional almsgiving, had tried to brighten the lives of the poor. Its sympathies lay with all attempts 'to brighten, better, and beautify the lives of the poorer members of the community'.⁴⁹¹ Its activities included the decoration of hospitals, parish rooms and workmen's clubs (without distinction of creed) with murals and paintings; the provision and maintenance of open spaces; the organisation of concerts in churches in the poorer areas, and bands in parks; the distribution of books and magazines to clubs and hospitals; and the provision of pamphlets on art subjects. Its President was the Duke of Edinburgh; Octavia Hill of the Charities Organisation Society was one of its Treasurers; and its small but distinguished membership also included William Morris and Frederic Watts RA. In an article on the Kyrle Society for *Merry England*, Alice Meynell suggested that there could be no better remedy for 'the ennui that saddens many a girl's life' than co-operation with the Kyrle Society: here she was taking up another of Cardinal Manning's themes, in her concern for how unmarried and leisured laywomen could usefully occupy themselves.⁴⁹²

Membership of the Kyrle Society at once placed Britten and the Meynells in the vanguard of contemporary thought in that they were concerned with providing the working classes with access, not merely to the basic necessities of food and accommodation, but to the 'higher' civilizing influences of music, nature and the visual arts. As befitted its title, *Merry England* laid stress - uniquely among the periodicals under discussion - on the need to counteract what Wilfrid Meynell perceived as the cheerless nature of late nineteenth-century England, and it made frequent reference to the need for harmless, secular entertainment which would appeal to the poor such as music in the parks, rather than to

⁴⁹¹ From *Guide to the Italian Pictures at Hampton Court* (The Kyrle Pamphlets, no 2) by Mary Logan (1894). Appendix, unnumbered pages.

⁴⁹² 'The Kyrle Society', *Merry England*, July 1884, p.156

unrelentingly religious or 'improving' activities. One writer wanted more Bank Holidays, with the parks open, to give the poor badly-needed rest and reduce class divisions; another commended the opening of the first 'Coffee Hall', initiated to provide the poor with congenial entertainment and encourage temperance;⁴⁹³ and another supported novel reading among the working-classes.⁴⁹⁴ In 'The Kyrle Society' (July 1884), Alice Corkran acknowledged that the Society's members knew that in some quarters they were a focus of derision:

“Behold”, said amused utilitarians, “the poor ask for bread, and a band of lank aesthetics comes to them with sunflowers; they ask for coal and they will be presented with peacock screens”. Jokes break no bones ... Life is synonymous with feeling; and existence bereft of every charming emotion, lacks one of the strongest influences towards its christening and elevation’.⁴⁹⁵

The civilizing influence of culture was not only a good thing in itself but would encourage religious feeling and attendance. Wilfrid Meynell (writing as Francis Phillimore in 'A Manchester Museum') argued the case for making museums accessible and welcoming to the working-classes and stated, quoting T.F Horsfall, that 'Faith cannot live in hideous towns'.⁴⁹⁶

(iii)

The great 'Christianization and Civilization' debate rumbled on for years. Those on the side of 'Christianization' felt that the duty of the Church was simply to preach the gospel: the starving and ill-housed could still attend Church and receive Communion, and this was the only true form of 'Civilization'. On the other side of the debate were those, like Cardinal Manning, James Britten and the Meynells, who had observed that the poor were already largely lost to the Faith and that it required near superhuman powers to lead a moral and religious life among the urban slums. A people with adequate housing and shorter working hours, with some room in their lives for thought and wholesome leisure,

⁴⁹³ 'At the Royal Vic', *Merry England*, February 1884.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Left Behind!', *Merry England*, August 1885.

⁴⁹⁵ The Kyrle Society', p.154

⁴⁹⁶ 'A Manchester Museum', *Merry England*, October 1883, p.448

would be more receptive to the Gospel and better fitted to turn their attention to religious observance.

The debate can be said to have come fully to the fore with a speech made by the Rev. Dr William Barry to the Catholic Conference at Birmingham in July 1890. As the *Tablet* reported, Dr Barry spoke on 'Christianity and the Masses': 'Has Christianity ceased to influence the lives of the masses in our large towns, signs and proofs of its influence having lapsed? What methods should be followed to meet this state of things?'⁴⁹⁷ His speech was then printed in the *Tablet* and the *Tablet's* correspondence pages were for the next few weeks much occupied by 'Christianization and Civilization'.⁴⁹⁸ Dr Barry also expounded his views, and defended his position, in 'The Church and the Social Revolution', in the *Dublin Review* of October 1890. He was by this time a well-known figure, later described by the *Dublin Review* of April 1902 as being in the front rank of English Literature. Educated at Oscott, he taught philosophy at Oscott and elsewhere before becoming professor of theology there and then, in 1883, priest at the mission of St Birinus at Dorchester-on-Thames. By this time he was a successful novelist (whose novels touched on the problem of the poor), and his non-fiction appeared in (amongst other journals) the *Quarterly Review*, *Nineteenth Century*, *Contemporary Review*, *National Review*, *Catholic World*, *Tablet*, and *Catholic Times*. As Gilley has observed, his social views were heavily influenced by the teaching of Cardinals Manning and Gibbons and of Leo XIII.⁴⁹⁹ He contributed to the Catholic Encyclopaedia of 1907-1912 and to the Cambridge Modern History, and wrote biographies of Newman and Renan.⁵⁰⁰ If in 1887 James Britten had trodden on the finer feelings of more conservative Catholics, then with his speech to the 1890 Conference and the essay in the *Dublin Review* which followed, Barry here trampled them underfoot. This was not with the content alone: Dr Barry, like Cardinal Manning, habitually expressed himself in language too blunt for the comfort of the *Dublin Review* or the *Tablet*. McClelland has contrasted Cardinal Manning's speech when discussing the social question with Cardinal Vaughan's use of 'condescending' terms

⁴⁹⁷ *Tablet*, 5/7/1890, p.8

⁴⁹⁸ *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, pp.68-69

⁴⁹⁹ Sheridan Gilley, 'Father William Barry: Priest and Novelist', in *Recusant History*, October 1999, pp.537-540

⁵⁰⁰ Dr Barry did not always wear this learning lightly. In this one, consciously learned, article, he quoted or made reference to (among others) J. A. Froude, Adam Smith, Malthus, George Eliot, Leigh Hunt, Henry George, Darwin, John Bright, Herbert Spencer, Sidney Webb, Cardinal Manning, Professor Huxley, Carlyle, Marx, Engels, Lawrence Gronland, Dr Ingram, Professor Foxwell, Disraeli, Weiss, Professor Cairns, Graham Wallas, Hyndman, William Morris, Matthew Arnold, and Edmund Burke.

such as the 'lower orders'.⁵⁰¹ In fact Manning's language is in sharp contrast with almost all the other writers - especially Devas, who deliberately adhered to increasingly archaic terminology - with the exception of Dr Barry.

Dr Barry summed up the main thrust of his speech in a letter to the *Tablet*, printed in the same issue in which the speech was also reproduced:

'I contended ... that we must preach and practice a social Christianity which shall occupy itself with this world as well as the next. That it is the surroundings of the artisan class and of the classes beneath it which make them careless or indifferent to every kind of religion ... it is an idle thing to offer them Christian beliefs wrapped in abstruse or conventional language, while we take no effective measure to make their surroundings human or to see that they have decent homes and the just reward of their toil'.⁵⁰²

In the speech itself, he commented,

'Our motto must be; "First civilise, then Christianise". Do not let us begin building from the roof downwards. The social condition has created this domestic heathenism. Then the social condition must be changed ... Christianity is not a thing you put into commission, or have done by contract. If I am asked how it is to be brought to the masses, I reply, show them how they can be saved by it, and enabled to live a true human life, in this world; then, perhaps, they will believe you about the next'.⁵⁰³

The speech itself, and the succeeding essay in the *Dublin* formed a strong attack on Political Economy, which Barry saw as still being treated, in spite of 'all the utterances which profess to guide our social and political actions' as something apart from human life. For him, the efforts of Devas and others to establish political economy as an integral part of ethics had been in vain. He quoted a German professor of science as remarking that 'The existence of the lower classes is without joy and without justice' and added:

'And suppose the message of the Old Testament were justice, as that of the New Testament is joy; and furthermore, that the science itself of wealth were undergoing a transformation in the divine light which falls out of these windows of heaven upon its pages, can we believe that the Catholic priest or layman has no part assigned to him in bringing about the change by that Providence which is manifestly directing it all? ... whilst I recognize a sort of "indirect adaptation" of

⁵⁰¹ McClelland, (*Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence*), *op. cit.*, pp.23-24

⁵⁰² *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, p.65

⁵⁰³ 'Christianity and the Masses', pp.68-69

our methods and resources to the conditions of the time, it seems to me highly desirable that we should cast off the shreds and tatters of legal disabilities still hanging about us, and instead of looking on ourselves as mere “resident aliens” in the nineteenth century, should contribute a direct and deliberate share to the establishment of a social ethics in harmony with our beliefs’.⁵⁰⁴

Unless this was done, Dr Barry argued, then Catholics were tacitly admitting that this world was at present ‘utterly beyond the care of the Heavenly Father, and that He means His reign to begin when the world has been burnt with fire on the Day of Judgment, but not a moment sooner’. Those Catholics who behaved as though they belonged to a tiny and persecuted flock were ‘Social Quietists’, refusing to face up to the fact that they were full citizens, free to take seats in Parliament, in the County Council, and on Boards of Education. And if they were to take their part in governing, then ‘there is implied in any successful and generally beneficent action they may resolve upon, nothing less than a public code of ethics, which will take into its purview the whole extent of social phenomena and their laws’.

At present Catholics had no such code, and lay Catholic education was not fitted to produce one. After applying ‘If a man will not work, neither let him eat’ to the idle rich rather than to the poor, and arguing that the current system obliged the poor to buy goods and foodstuffs they knew to be unfit, Dr Barry reached the seminal point of his essay:

‘But a higher degree of social perfection means a higher morality, and from what source can it be derived except the living mind of Christ, incarnate in the Catholic Church? The process of change, though beginning in the thoughts of men as all great changes have done, will show itself outwardly, not at first by restoring the religion of old time to its sovereign place, but by a long-continued strenuous endeavour to lift up the fallen multitude till they live a true human life again’.⁵⁰⁵

It would be necessary to improve the surroundings of the poor, restrict their hours of work, and improve the education of both rich and poor in order to break down the wall of division which ‘Protestantism, developed into “capitalism”, has set up between them ... This may be called, according as we view the aim or the method, either Christianizing or civilizing the present generation; and assuredly I shall not stickle for a word’. To those who told him that society would be renovated by ‘the direct and reiterated preaching of the great Christian truths’ he answered that although this was true,

⁵⁰⁴ ‘The Church and the Social Revolution’, p.292

‘inasmuch as no moral revolution can take place for the better which is not instinct with the spirit of the New Testament ... to hold up the crucifix to those whom I consider to be little else than savages in the way of life, would be, or rather has been, for the most part, ineffective and unprofitable’.⁵⁰⁶

When the current social upheavals had died down, it was into the new age of democracy that the Catholic Church would have to deliver its message:

‘When the tyrannous and anarchic right of unlimited private capital has gone its way, will the no less anarchic “right of private judgment” survive it? The Catholic idea of fraternity is born into the world again. Surely we have but to claim our own, and the ages of Faith may begin under happier auspices, on a planet which science had subdued to man’s dominion, while religion has thrown a light upon its origin and destiny’.⁵⁰⁷

Dr Barry’s essay was based on a speech he had previously read at the Catholic Conference at Birmingham in July of the same year, and was in part a response to the criticisms that paper had received. The *Tablet* reported that while several passages of his speech had been loudly applauded, some in the audience had ‘profoundly dissented’ from his views. In a discussion later on in the day Canon Brownlow had risen to express his disagreement: Dr Barry had maintained that you must civilize first and Christianize afterwards, but Canon Brownlow believed that to Christianize was to civilize - ‘else how were the poor and uneducated to reach heaven?’. The discussion continued, quickly becoming mixed up with the question of the Salvation Army and its own efforts to reach out to the ‘residuum’, and became somewhat heated - particularly over the question of whether priests were discouraging lay involvement - until, as the *Tablet* reported, ‘Canon Scannell ... conciliated a considerable portion of the meeting by singing the praises of the laity’.⁵⁰⁸ Dr Barry himself recorded, ‘When I had finished, among applause and wonder, Bishop Vaughan shook hands with me ... I thought it uncommonly brave of him. The tempest followed in that hall, then in the newspapers’.⁵⁰⁹ Further evidence of Vaughan’s support lay in the fact that the speech was immediately published, in its entirety, in the *Tablet*⁵¹⁰ and that he offered Dr Barry a chance to answer his critics and elaborate his ideas with the

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.208

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.300

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.301

⁵⁰⁸ *Tablet*, 5/7/1890, pp.7-9

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in Gilley, (‘Father William Barry’), *op. cit.*, p.538.

⁵¹⁰ ‘Christianity and the Masses’, pp.68-69

publication of 'The Church and the Social Revolution' in the next number of the *Dublin Review* (October 1890). In the interim, the debate continued in the correspondence pages of the *Tablet* - under the heading, 'Christianity and Civilisation' - and in the course of this the charge of Pelagianism - which had hung, unspoken, over James Britten and all those who emphasised the need to improve the conditions of the poor - was at last brought into the open.⁵¹¹ Canon Brownlow wrote of Dr Barry's speech, 'Taken as it stands this sounds like Pelagianism; though I am quite sure that Dr Barry would indignantly repudiate such an interpretation of his meaning'. Dr Barry responded immediately:

'Provost Brownlow, in his kindly way, is sure that I do not mean Pelagianism when I advocate a propaganda of morality and natural religion, *as applied to the community at large and not merely to individuals*, in order that the revealed doctrines may find a fit audience. No, and neither would *he* like to be charged with a fanatical Calvinism, or gospel of "instantaneous conversion", which is the opposite extreme to Pelagianism. There is plenty of room for the doctrine I hold between these heretical exaggerations. Catholic teachers have invariably recognised a season of preparation before adults could be initiated to their profit into the Christian mysteries. What else am I suggesting but the application of that rule to our actual circumstances? By "civilizing", then, I do not understand the mere preaching up of human virtues, but making them ordinarily possible to the great multitude upon which they have lost their hold. I think nothing but social and legislative action on a large scale will prove equal to the task'.⁵¹²

Dr Barry declined to continue the debate in the correspondence pages of the *Tablet*, announcing that 'By the courtesy of his lordship the Bishop of Salford' he was hoping to do so in the number of the *Dublin Review*.⁵¹³ After this the ultra-conservative C. Rayleigh Chichester, who in the 1880s had sparred with Devas in the *Tablet*'s correspondence pages, brought the Irish question into the debate and it drifted to a halt, rather as a debate in the 1880s in the same correspondence pages on 'how to reach the working classes' had become side-tracked into a discussion on the ritualistic movement.

In speaking of making human virtues 'ordinarily possible to the great multitude' Dr Barry was echoing Cardinal Manning's own view that while it was possible to lead a moral life in conditions of urban destitution, to do so required extraordinary powers. In fact Barry was

⁵¹¹ Pelagius, a British preacher active in Rome in the 390s, argued that people had within them the power to reach Christian perfection. His teachings were judged to be heretical in that they seemed to deny that Divine Grace must inspire good works if they are to merit salvation. Such views would form an antithesis of the Calvinist standpoint, hence Dr Barry's response to Canon Brownlow.

⁵¹² *Tablet*, 26/7/1890, p.141

⁵¹³ *Tablet*, 9/8/1890, p.220

in his social views thoroughly Manningite. Manning, more than anyone, was involved in the 'civilization and Christianization' debate and was accused by his opponents of putting the temporal before the spiritual when it came to the working-classes. What is perhaps surprising is the extent to which even the more recent of Manning's biographers have attempted to separate his concern for the corporal and spiritual welfare of the poor and to assess their proportions. Manning himself did not differentiate between the two: his understanding of the realities of life among the very poor was such that he felt that the revitalisation of the Faith among the people could only happen at the same time - or after - their material conditions had been improved. His habit, which was consistent, of speaking as though the two aspects - physical and spiritual improvement - were necessarily and inextricably bound up with each other, can only have been deliberate. When he spoke, as he often did, of the 'moral condition' of the poor, he spoke of both the physical environment (most usually, their living conditions) and their spiritual state. He wrote to Sir Charles Dilke on the subject of the housing of the poor: 'Without a high-handed executive nothing will be done till another generation has been *morally* destroyed, but construction must keep place with destruction'.⁵¹⁴

Earlier, in his conclusion to 'The Dignity and Rights of Labour' of 1874 he observed that the piling up of mountains of wealth, whether in the hands of classes or individuals, could not go on 'if these moral conditions of our people are not healed. No commonwealth can rest on such foundations'.⁵¹⁵ Such passages have been interpreted as evidence that Cardinal Manning's interest in the dwellings of the poor arose primarily from his concern for their moral condition. In fact while Manning was of course ultimately concerned with morality and with the hereafter as any priest must be, this did not militate against his concern for lives in the here and now: rather, it increased it. The two aims were not, for him, in conflict or in competition. Manning's disciple, Wilfrid Meynell had founded *Merry England* because he 'felt the need for an organ to put forward Catholic principles especially in regard to the *redemption* of the workers':⁵¹⁶ that is to say, their social and religious redemption. Similarly, Meynell spoke later on of Manning's understanding that 'a great social redemption must precede the spiritual redemption, so long delayed'.⁵¹⁷ Those, like Meynell and Fr Maher, had been convinced by Manning's writings on the social question

⁵¹⁴ My italics. Quoted in McClelland, (*Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence*), *op. cit.*, p.137

⁵¹⁵ 'Miscellanies', vol II, pp.81

⁵¹⁶ My italics. Quoted in Viola Meynell, *op. cit.*, p.11

thoroughly understood that the two causes were not distinct. To have whole families living in one room, Fr Maher remarked, was

‘... obviously as ruinous to morality, as to comfort, cleanliness, or health. Acute want and misery degrade and destroy man’s nature. Drink, brutality, and crime are as much the consequence as the cause of extreme poverty ... Clearly, then, Almighty God cannot sanction those features of our present society which render a moral existence practically impossible to large portions of our people’.⁵¹⁸

While Devas liked to dwell on the possibilities for holiness of poor lives led in a rural environment, he too was alive to the moral dangers of modern poverty: the attractions of the gin shop for those in uncertain employment and crowded, comfortless homes; the lack of Christian training and control of the young, which would once have been provided by the apprenticeship system, and the Poor Laws, which mitigated against the Christian doctrine of care and respect for old age.

‘But I have said enough to be able to meet the objection of those who say: “Let England first be won back to the true faith and then the laws will mend themselves. What is wanted is moral and not legal reform, and a generation of atheists is just as bad with fixity of tenure and fair wages as without”. I answer that you cannot separate in this way moral and legal reform, as though the one was wholly cause, the other wholly effect, when they are both causes and both effects; and that one of the chief ways in which England is to be won back to the true faith is precisely to mend those laws and institutions which are demoralizing the English people; and that the more Catholics take the lead in these reforms the better will be the result’.⁵¹⁹

The Catholic apologists for effort aimed at ‘civilizing’ the poor - and indeed all those in the Churches who argued for greater social effort - were accused by some of putting the social question before faith: it was an attitude which persisted well into the next century. In fact Manning’s attitude to ‘Christianization and civilization’ was far more widely shared on the Continent: this point of view informed the surge in Catholic social activity across Europe. Glimpses of this appear from time to time in the journals: just one example came in ‘Ideals of Charity’ by Virginia M. Crawford in the *Month* of May 1899. Reporting on the work of Père van Langermeersch SJ, who instituted the *Ligue des Femmes Chrétiennes*, a lay society which aimed at improving the industrial position of women-workers in Brussels, she remarked that he had ‘felt from the outset that industrial and moral reform must go

⁵¹⁷ *Life of Cardinal Vaughan* - Snead-Cox (2 vols, London, 1911), vol 1, pp.479

⁵¹⁸ ‘A Socialist’s Dream’, pt. 2, p.186

hand in hand'.⁵²⁰ Miss Crawford's article showed the extent to which Catholics were still anxious to make it clear that their first concern was, and must always be, with the spiritual effects of their social work. She remarked that while the Protestant ideal of charity seemed to be that one should take care of a man's material interests first, and then if possible, 'throw in a word for his soul' - or, if under the circumstances it seemed inadvisable, not to refer to his soul at all. The Catholic position as she understood it was rather different. While in England there was a growing tendency to separate religion and philanthropy, for Catholics they must go hand-in-hand. Charitable endeavours should be aimed at bringing 'the broad truth of Christianity to bear directly on the practical affairs of life'.⁵²¹ If the end results were not to bring man nearer to God, then all efforts had been wasted. This position had been put rather more bluntly by Fr Bernard Vaughan, SJ, to a Catholic Social Union gathering two years before: 'What were these clubs for? They were to get at the souls of the people through their bodies'.⁵²² Yet in his regular bulletins in the *Tablet*, the CSU's head social worker and usual spokesman, Charles Gatty, revealed that Mrs Crawford's idea of the Protestant position was his own: he constantly stated his belief that, while the CSU ultimately aimed at religious and moral improvement, it was something if its clubs even kept children harmlessly occupied. Gatty had, several years earlier, given his support to Dr Barry during the argument over 'Christianisation and Civilisation' between Dr Barry and Fr Rider in the pages of the *Tablet*.⁵²³

Moreover, as Mrs Crawford herself went on to acknowledge, there was a difficulty with the Catholic position as she perceived it. Human life could not be divided neatly into compartments, and it was impossible to draw a clear line between a person's material and moral needs. She admitted that in the case of real destitution, it was very rare for improvement in material matters not to be followed by some amelioration in morals:

'It is undeniable that a certain measure - albeit a modest one - of material comfort is an essential condition of morality. If a man is to respect his neighbours' property he must at least not be in imminent danger of starving himself. If he is to fulfil certain religious obligations, some leisure must be allowed him for the purpose. And therefore all moral effort which tends to secure to mankind certain elementary

⁵¹⁹ 'The Unemployed', p.12

⁵²⁰ 'Ideals of Charity', *Month*, May 1899, p.461

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p.459

⁵²² *Tablet*, 16/10/1897, p.621

⁵²³ *Tablet*, 12/7/1890, pp.65-66

human rights should be aided and welcomed by all, of whatever creed, who have the religious welfare of a nation at heart'.⁵²⁴

Despite reservations, the arguments of Cardinal Manning and Dr Barry were becoming orthodoxy. Fr Bernard Vaughan SJ told the members of the Catholic Social Union that:

'... you are, in your measure, other Christs - Saviours of Society - you, like Him, have gone "about doing good" to your poorer brethren - doing good to their bodies, and doing good to their souls - and in this order, caring first for the body and then for the soul: and in so doing you have done well. For as a man is a child of nature before becoming a child of grace, so must you not anticipate grace, but, like Christ Himself, you must begin by preparing nature for the reception of it'.⁵²⁵

In 1899 Cardinal Vaughan carefully set out the Catholic position as he saw it, in an introduction to the translation by Father Brady of Mgr. Bougaud's *History of St Vincent de Paul* (1891), excerpts of which were printed in the *Tablet* under the heading of 'The Church and the Social Question'. He first regretted, in very characteristic terminology, the absence among the poor not only of the wealthy landlord, but 'of the civilizing, humanizing, Christianizing influence of those who by education are refined, cultivated, charitable, and religious', and went on:

'We are witnesses here in England of an extraordinary movement ... there has sprung up a spirit of philanthropy, dispensing money and personal service, which is endeavouring to remedy the evil created by the absence of practical Christianity. It is good as far as it goes; it is an imitation by the natural man of that which is supernatural and divine; but it cannot be expected to do the work of Christianity, which alone is capable of regenerating and elevating the human race'.⁵²⁶

James Britten, writing in the *Month* as late as October 1902 on the work of boys' clubs in Northampton, Massachusetts, remarked that it was necessary to be content for a long time with a very little in the way of religious observation from the 'lower strata' of Catholic lads. He still felt the need to explain that, while he knew that this would be looked upon as shocking by those who have no practical or personal acquaintance with the condition of street lads, it was none the less true, 'and it is just as well that folk who may be drawn to

⁵²⁴ 'Ideals of Charity', p.460

⁵²⁵ *Tablet*, 5/5/1894, p.702. Fr Vaughan's speech was reproduced in its entirety, pp.698-702.

⁵²⁶ *Tablet*, 27/5/1899, p.833

the work of boy-saving should know what - or what not - to expect'.⁵²⁷ A month later he quoted Dr Barry and Cardinal Manning in support of his case:

“‘You must civilize before you can Christianize,” said a priest at one of the earlier Catholic Conferences; and the saying startled many and aroused protest. Yet is it not true? When Cardinal Manning heard it objected to the League of the Cross that it sometimes made men sober without inducing them to become religious, he answered, “When a man is sober, I can talk to him, and he will listen; when he is drunk, it is useless to talk to him, for he *cannot* listen”’.⁵²⁸

Cardinal Vaughan was thoroughly behind the drive for ‘Civilization’ and by 1895, as the *Tablet* reported, was putting forward proposals for recreation halls in the poorest areas of large towns.⁵²⁹ With the gradual success of the arguments for ‘civilization’ had come a softening of the traditional attitude to social legislation. The old attitude was summed up by Fr Lehmkuhl in the German Jesuit journal *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*, as reported in the Literary Record section of the *Month*:

‘The regulations recommended to be adopted by the different Governments concerning labour in mines, the Sunday rest, the employment of women and children, are, he asserts, in theory most desirable, but will prove of no practical efficiency, because not grounded on the fear of God and the spirit of Christianity, which alone can teach contentment to the poor and charity to the rich’.⁵³⁰

Cardinal Manning’s own stance was well illustrated in the ‘Notes’ section of the *Tablet* of 9/2/1889, which reported his reaction (in a letter to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*) to the announcement that the London edition of the *New York Herald* was to be published on every day of the week:

‘I am heartily glad to see your vigorous protest against the slightest shadow of seven days’ work. You will know for how many reasons, *higher and lower*,⁵³¹ I am opposed to the least infraction of the day of rest, and I therefore am ready, in behalf of the millions of our hardworking people, to join with you on the broad ground, common to the vast majority of English manual workers, in protesting against the least invasion of our day of rest’.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ ‘Boy-Savers’, pt. 1, *Month*, October 1902 p.359

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.357

⁵²⁹ *Tablet*, 4/5/1895, p.687

⁵³⁰ *Month*, October 1890, p.303

⁵³¹ My italics.

⁵³² *Tablet*, 9/2/1889, p.207

This was the stance towards which the Catholic writers in general moved during the 1890s. Near the end of this period, Mr Arthur Chilton Thomas, the Honorary Manager of the Homes for Catholic Friendless Youths in Liverpool, wrote to the *Tablet* on the subject of street trading by children, which he felt municipalities should have abolished years ago. The local council in Liverpool now planned, as a first step, to introduce a system of regulation by license. Mr Chilton Thomas remarked:

‘One should not hesitate to praise a good work merely because it is not good from every point of view ... If social movements are to be thoroughly satisfactory to Catholics, whilst the state does her part, the Church must also do her share. The State cares for the body, and leaves the Church to care for the soul. If the State, whilst caring for the body, gives the Church the chance of caring for the soul, the State has done her part and done it well’.⁵³³

This glimpse of a conception of a modern partnership between Church and State was a new departure in the Catholic journals, although there are no signs that it was quickly taken up and elaborated. Shortly afterwards, Mr Chilton Thomas appeared again in the pages of the *Tablet*, advocating ‘safe’ co-operation with non-Catholics on social work but the scrupulous avoidance of unsectarian children’s homes. Perhaps the clearest sign of all of the softened attitude on social legislation came with the comments made by Cardinal Vaughan when receiving a deputation representing trade-unions and friendly societies seeking his support for the establishment of a universal old-age pension scheme on the terms outlined by Charles Booth. Cardinal Vaughan expressed a preference for more piecemeal legislation rather than tax-payers being burdened with pensions for all. If a scheme on his lines was put forward, he would support that, but if theirs was the only scheme before the country, ‘well he supposed he should support it because, although he did not think it ideally the best, it was the only scheme in possession and the one which must be pushed forward’.⁵³⁴

(iv)

The Catholic writers on the problem of the poor shared their contemporaries’ perception of the 1890s as a decade in which pauperism declined and the socio-economic conditions of the working-classes steadily improved. The *Dublin*, reviewing *Le Clergé et la Question*

⁵³³ *Tablet*, 12/11/1898, p.782-783

⁵³⁴ Reported in the *Tablet*, 7/10/1899, p.579

Sociale par le dr Scheicher, examen Critique par Auguste Onclair Pretre (1899) regretted Fr Onclair's failure to appreciate this fact: 'He starts with the false premiss of the increasing misery of the working classes, an assumption absolutely in contradiction with the fact, since the progressive advance in their standard of comfort is one of the most obvious commonplaces of social history'.⁵³⁵ To a large extent this view has been shared by modern historians. Both contemporary and modern commentators have also observed that at the same time the gap between the increasingly 'respectable' working-class and those left behind - the 'residuum' - widened.

Although life had improved for the more fortunate, there was left a great deal of deprivation, squalor, want, and disease. The radical Catholic journalist Robert Dell, in his *Roman Catholics and the Social Question* (1899), which comprised articles reprinted from the *Weekly Register*, calculated that in 1892 one in five people in London died in a workhouse, poor hospital, or lunatic asylum. Little had been done to improve housing for the very poor, despite the alarm over the 'housing crisis' in the 1880s. As a clearer gap opened between the 'respectable' poor and the rest, so attitudes - which had long tended to divide the poor into the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' - tended to harden towards the 'residuum', who became by contrast even further beyond the pale. Gilley has argued that during the mid-Victorian period the acute sense of the injustice done to the poor during the Middle Ages, allied to an emphasis on the Biblical edict that the poverty would always exist, had meant that Catholics were predisposed 'to suspend judgement upon even the apparently undeserving poor'.⁵³⁶ Priests, nuns and sometimes even lay men and women lived as and among the poor: the emphasis was on 'Holy Poverty'. By the 1870s, Gilley has argued, this emphasis had lost ground as the 'eroding worldly values of snobbery and respectability claimed their due'.⁵³⁷ Certainly the evidence of the Catholic journals in the 1880s and 1890s suggests that the writers felt they were addressing a flock who had thoroughly embraced the prevailing mores including a 'judgmental' attitude to poverty. One of the most striking impressions left by the journals is the apparent acceptance of most writers that the current generation of the 'submerged tenth' or 'the residuum' were utterly lost. It would be useless to attempt to do anything for a people so brutalised, so lacking in moral fibre. At times it seemed that, except in a strictly Christian sense, the 'submerged

⁵³⁵ *Dublin*, April 1899, p.468

⁵³⁶ Gilley, ('Heretic London...'), *op. cit.*, p.61

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.81

tenth' were not fellow human beings, but creatures of another and lower species. In contrast to Devas's idealised picture of rustic poverty, an anonymous commentator in the *Month* on 'London Lodging-Houses' remarked:

'We have always to be on our guard against identifying the misery the educated man suffers in such a place with what is felt by the very differently constituted class to which the average inmates belong. Nay, what is inexpressibly revolting to the taste and other senses of those who are delicately bred is often a matter of indifference, or perhaps a source of positive relish and enjoyment to those who have been reared amid fifth and coarseness'.⁵³⁸

'It cannot be expected ... that much can be done to alleviate the suffering of the present generation' remarked W. Roberts in 'The Social Distress'⁵³⁹ while an anonymous writer on unemployment for the *Tablet* commented:

'The most we can look for is mitigation. We may be thankful if the disease does not grow much worse ... The saddest thing of all is the way in which so many of the class whom we would wish to help have become materialised and brutalised ... employment might be provided by better management and most austere public spirit on the part of men of power and position. But angels could not bring these wretched beings to work. Industry has fled from them with all the other virtues ... They never will, they morally cannot, take a place in the commonwealth of labour and mutual beneficence ... Our best hope is to prevent recruits coming to their ranks...'.⁵⁴⁰

In 'On Some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed' for the *Month* of February 1894, Ada Streeter made an attempt - a rare one in the journals - to identify and differentiate between the different types of unemployment. Having identified the most serious problem as being the 'positively' (ie long-term) unemployed, she went on, in her next article for the *Month*, to describe them as being:

'below the required standard of efficiency, either through lack of original training or through some physical or moral defect... They are not of necessity numerically superfluous, they are simply *unfit*, and as such have sunk into a useless sediment choking up the labour market. It is to this class, which has been technically spoken of as the "submerged tenth," that we would restrict the application of the word unemployed, as in them it expresses a chronic condition attributable to some inadequacy inherent in them'.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ *Month*, January 1887, p.68

⁵³⁹ 'The Social Distress', pp.276-278

⁵⁴⁰ 'The Problem of the Unemployed', *Tablet*, 10/12/1887, p.924

⁵⁴¹ 'On Some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', p.155

Two months later, also in the *Month*, Miss Streeter observed that to send such people to Labour Colonies such as those existing in parts of the Continent would not damage the economy at home, since it would only 'carry off its refuse'.⁵⁴² Miss Streeter's language was not confined to conservative social commentators: rather, it was the usual terminology of the day. In May 1885 Arnold White, for example, had referred to the section of the poor who were so 'physically, mentally and morally unfit' that there was nothing to be done 'except to let them die by leaving them alone'; the leading Socialist H.M. Hyndman reached the same conclusion; and in January 1885 Samuel Smith described the 'residuum' as 'like the sewage of the metropolis which remained floating at the mouth of the Thames last summer, because there is not scour sufficient to propel it into the sea'.⁵⁴³ Yet if Miss Streeter's language was not exceptional, nor did it betray any influence of a Catholic or Christian approach to the problem. Neither Manning nor Devas could have approved it: and it was in marked contrast to the ideas of the Christian Socialist movement, who stressed the artificial nature of the distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' worlds, and concomitantly, the equal value of all human lives.

This almost casual acceptance of the loss of an entire generation formed another instance of where the views of Cardinal Manning were in marked contrast to most of his contemporary co-religionists. Manning's radicalism may be said to have lain in his sense of the urgency as well as the centrality for Catholics of the problem of the poor. Writing to General Booth on the publication of *Darkest England and the Way Out*, Manning had said:

'I hold that every man has a right to bread or to work. The modern economists say, "Society must adjust the demand and supply of labour until all are employed". I have asked "How many years are required for all this absorption, and how many weeks and days will starve an honest man and his children?" To this I have never got an answer'.⁵⁴⁴

Manning was set apart not only by his sense of the urgency but in his sense of where the responsibility for the 'residuum' lay. Its existence was indeed a disgrace, but not to the

⁵⁴² 'The Foreign Labour Colonies, *Month*, April 1894, p.510

⁵⁴³ Arnold White, 'The Normal Poor of London', in *Contemporary Review*, May 1885; H.M. Hyndman, 'English Workmen as They Are', *Contemporary Review*, July 1887; and Samuel Smith, 'The industrial training of destitute children', *Contemporary Review*, January 1885. Quoted in Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, pp.309-310

⁵⁴⁴ Cardinal Manning to General Booth, 30/10/1890. 'Letters', p.50

poor; rather, to those more fortunate whose failure of duty allowed a 'residuum' to exist. Speaking to an emergency meeting on unemployment he remarked of the recent meetings in Trafalgar Square that there had, according to the newspapers, been present some of the 'deserving' class of poor, but also an immense mass of 'loafers and vagabonds':

'If that were so it was a great rebuke to London. It was the shame, the scandal, he would say the sin of the metropolis that such a class should exist ... He was told there were places into which the police could not enter. He did not believe it. Thirty years ago he went into places where it was said the police dared not go, and found them very harmless ... But they ought not to be endured in a city which grew to the extent of twenty millions of wealth every year. If we had done our duty in times past such districts would not be found'.⁵⁴⁵

If Catholics shared the prevailing distaste for the 'residuum' they also shared the prevailing fear that, in addition to being themselves a possible source of riot and social unrest, those who made up the 'residuum' might have an adverse effect on the respectable working-classes: infect them, as it were, with their own failings. During the 1890s, as Stedman Jones has described, the existence of the residuum was increasingly perceived as a threat to national efficiency and to the Empire.⁵⁴⁶

An even more serious and urgent threat in Catholic eyes was that of the 'leakage' from the Faith. The growing realisation of this 'leakage' was all the more shocking as Catholics had for decades held to the belief that their poor in England had clung to their faith and their morals, unlike the Anglican poor who were widely perceived as having abandoned the habit of church-going. It was all the more seen a source of self-satisfaction in that the Established Church was richly-endowed, while the overwhelmingly working-class Catholics had had to find among themselves the money to build churches and schools in the mid-Victorian period. Moreover the courage and self-sacrifice of priests and nuns working in slum parishes was a subject of remark and praise by those outside the Faith, not least among Socialist commentators. While modern historians have tentatively concluded that the Roman Catholic poor probably did attend church more often than their Protestant counterparts at this time, in fact all the churches in the 1880s and 1890s were alarmed at the increasing religious indifference among the working-classes. Catholic complacency was shaken by the realisation that their poor were, in ever increasing numbers, drifting

⁵⁴⁵ Reported in the *Tablet*, 10/12/1887, p.931

⁵⁴⁶ Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, pp.287-288, 330.

away from religion entirely or into the Protestant churches, attracted by clubs and societies or other forms of charitable help. While there was concern, however, the journals do not reveal a real sense of crisis. In the *Tablet* Austin J. King made a rueful comparison between the 'leakage' of the poor and the stream of educated men converting to the Catholic Church from the Anglican Church and the universities.⁵⁴⁷ Pereiro, writing of the Edwardian era, has suggested that it was this conspicuous inward flow of educated converts which served to dampen concern over the less visible but potentially disastrous 'leakage' at the other end of the social scale.⁵⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the renewed Catholic social effort of the 1890s was driven more by fear of the 'leakage' than by any of the moral imperatives urged by the late Cardinal Manning.

The Catholic journals were also much concerned with the 'kidnapping' of Catholic children into Protestant schools and orphanages. The *Tablet* at this time became increasingly preoccupied with the quarrel with Dr Barnardo, (with whom the Catholic Church did not reach an amicable resolution until 1900) and with the general issue of Protestant 'Proselytism'. Concern was sharpened by the passing in 1889 of the Children's Protection Bill, under which children found selling or singing in the streets at night could be placed under the protection of 'fit persons' named by the Magistrate Courts. This could mean Catholic children being taken to Protestant shelters and 'Homes', from whence they might never be claimed by their drunk, absent, or simply destitute parents. The *Tablet* urged that 'We must organize to combat this enemy. We must have a Vigilant Society to organize and detect the proselytizer at his work ... we must tackle the evil, we must prepare to face the labour and expense of organization'.⁵⁴⁹

Catholic appeals for alms or active social endeavour at this time were usually inspired directly by the need to stem the 'leakage'. Qualms about the wisdom of learning from or copying the social actions of the other Churches did not long survive the clearly demonstrable threat posed by their attractions for the Catholic young. In his regular articles in the *Tablet*, the Catholic Social Union spokesman, Charles Gatty pointed out the danger again and again: 'If we Catholics fail them, the Protestants befriend them, and then we are

⁵⁴⁷ *Tablet*, 17/7/1897, p.98

⁵⁴⁸ James Pereiro, "Who are the Laity"?, in (eds) McClelland and Hodgetts, *op. cit.*, p.174

⁵⁴⁹ *Tablet*, 20/4/1889, p.604

surprised at the leakage from the Catholic Church!'.⁵⁵⁰ One specific instance of this aspect of the 'leakage' was discussed by 'Catholica' in an article on 'Catholic Women and Night-work' for the *Dublin* of October 1887. Help was badly needed in Bow, where Bryant and May employed many Irish girls in their match factories. The Dominican sisters held meetings and were establishing guilds for the girls; but like all nuns they could not go out at night and they were 'terribly hampered in their work by want of room, and by the existence of an excellent non-Catholic club and institution which tempts the girls by its comforts and advantages'.⁵⁵¹ Here was one clear and tangible example of the desperate need for lay assistance to stem the 'leakage'. The various reactions of the Churches to the plight of the Bryant and May match-girls to some extent typified their different approaches to the problem of the poor. The Catholic response was to open a club for the girls to use outside the working-hours, in opposition to the 'excellent' non-Catholic one already there; while, as Jones has shown, the Christian Socialists turned their attention to the working conditions themselves. Samuel Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall, interviewed the Managing Director at Bryant and May about conditions of employment, while Stewart Headlam lamented Annie Besant's support of the match-girls' strike in the following year, regretting that leadership in this matter should have been left to an atheist.⁵⁵² In 1891 Colonel Booth opened a factory which made matches without the use of poisonous phosphorus.

Cardinal Vaughan founded the Catholic Social Union in an attempt to muster lay help in stemming the leakage, and in holding off the 'spectre of Socialism, the determined uprising of the masses against privilege'.⁵⁵³ At Westminster and before, as Bishop of Salford, he had made frequent appeals for greater social activity on the part of the laity: his Lenten Pastoral of 1887, also published as a penny pamphlet, has been entitled 'The Love and Service of Christ in His Poor'. He had already conceived the possibility of using the temperance organisation founded by Cardinal Manning, the League of the Cross, as the foundation of 'a mighty and beneficent superstructure' which would embrace technical evening schools, Catholic benefit societies and the like.⁵⁵⁴ The idea for the 'CSU' was

⁵⁵⁰ *Tablet*, 31/3/1894, p.499

⁵⁵¹ 'Catholic Women and Night-work', *Dublin*, October 1887, p.p.307-308 (footnote)

⁵⁵² Jones, *op. cit.*, p.134n.81

⁵⁵³ 'The Catholic Conference of 1893', by 'Iota', *Month*, November 1893, p.331. The 1909 Index to the *Month* has 'F R Clarke SJ - authorship doubtful'. (Fr Richard Clarke, editor of the *Month* from 1882-94, sometimes used 'Iota' as a pseudonym, and also used his initials, 'RFC').

⁵⁵⁴ Speech to the League of the Cross convention, reported in the *Tablet*, 3/9/1892, p.370

initiated at the Catholic Conference of the following year: its central aim was to bind Catholics of all classes together. A circular distributed at the Catholic Conference stated the purpose of the CSU as being,

‘a Society to raise the social, moral, and material condition of our people, by educating our young men in habits of sobriety, thrift, self-respect, self-reliance, and independence of character in temporal matters; and our young women in the knowledge and habits which will help to make them good Catholic wives and mothers. It aims at uniting all classes on the Christian basis of religious, social, and human interests’.⁵⁵⁵

The phrase ‘to raise the social, moral, and material condition of our people’ is proof enough in itself that Cardinal Vaughan was a convert to the civilizing movement.

The Catholic Social Union followed the usual trend of Catholic social effort, in that it was inspired by the principles of the medieval guilds but, as Charles Gatty reported to the *Tablet*, it unashamedly followed the lines of successful Anglican enterprise in its establishment of evening clubs for boys and girls,⁵⁵⁶ later keeping pace with them in providing rural outings and - in a real sign of the times - in May 1895, the first CSU athletics competition. The chief and perhaps the only way in which the CSU marked a departure from older Catholic social efforts was in the emphasis placed on organisation. It existed as much to co-ordinate and organise existing Catholic social activities as to initiate new ones. The need for more organisation, so clearly recognised by Britten in his ‘The Work of the Laity’ in 1887, had been becoming increasingly apparent. In a letter written to the *Tablet* in response to the article on ‘Catholic Women and Night Work’ in the *Dublin*, Louisa E. Ward suggested that those ‘Catholic ladies’ interested in helping with night schools and clubs for girls in London should form themselves into a society, the better ‘for utilising individual efforts which might otherwise be wasted or misapplied’.⁵⁵⁷ As they entered the 1890s the Catholic writers and workers on the social question seized on the concept of ‘organisation’: they knew themselves to be swamped by the size of the ‘problem of the poor’ and this seemed to offer them a way out of their difficulty.

⁵⁵⁵ Reported in ‘The Catholic Conference of 1894’, p.273

⁵⁵⁶ *Tablet*, 31/3/1894, p.499

⁵⁵⁷ *Tablet*, 26/11/1887, p.857

Cardinal Vaughan's speech to the Catholic Conference at Portsmouth in 1893, in which he outlined his ideas for the new Social Union, revealed in its content and terminology nothing of Manning's influence and might have come from Frédéric Ozanam fifty years before:

'We need ... to make an appeal in these days to the laity, to men and women who have leisure and education, who have sympathy with the wants and sufferings of the lower orders. They must be brought into organization, and so into contact with the suffering portion of humanity in such a way as will, in the first instance, give them a clear knowledge of the wants and sufferings of the people. It was for the rich to show them that they were their true, hearty, and sincere friends.'⁵⁵⁸

'Organisation' now became the watchword for all Catholics active in the social field, from Cardinal Vaughan downwards. Mr J.A. Cunningham lamented (in the *Tablet's* correspondence pages) that Catholics were so far behind other bodies in, for example, 'the matter of finding employment, and looking after the daily temporal welfare of our people, by organised effort'.⁵⁵⁹ By the beginning of the 1890s the Society of St Vincent de Paul had already been working for some years with the Charity Organisation Society. It can be seen from the *Tablet* that Manning and Harrod, having set up the Catholic Association for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Poor, immediately consulted Octavia Hill and the Barnetts (all members of the COS) for advice on the best way forward.⁵⁶⁰ Shortly afterwards, the London Branches of the SVP appealed to the Provincial Council as to whether they could safely work with the COS. The answer was that they could, even to the extent of joining COS committees.⁵⁶¹ Catholics seem to have been reassured by the fact that the members of the COS, like the Catholic writers, laid great stress on the personal nature of assistance or charity given to the poor. It was well known, for example, that Octavia Hill went in person to collect the rents from the workmans' dwellings managed by the Society. Like the Catholic writers, the leaders of the COS regretting the widening of the gulf between rich and poor, and felt that the worst urban slums only existed because whole areas were unleavened by any occupants of a better class. The belief that voluntary, charitable endeavour could suffice to improve the lot of the poor if applied in an organised rather than in arbitrary way was the *raison d'être* of the COS, founded in 1869. By adopting this concentration on 'organisation' the Catholics could feel themselves to be

⁵⁵⁸ 'The Catholic Conference of 1893', p.331

⁵⁵⁹ *Tablet*, 2/6/1894, p.851

⁵⁶⁰ *Tablet*, 23/2/1884, pp.301-302

taking more realistic and effective measures to combat the modern problem of the poor while retaining their emphasis on the intensely personal nature of traditional charitable activity. In her article 'On some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', Ada Streeter, speaking of those few cases of reclaiming an individual who had fallen into the 'residuum' which had come within her own personal experience, commented that

'the influence which has encouraged him to attempt the first step upward has invariably been a little human sympathy ... a little organized care for him, as distinguished from mere municipal relief as at present existing, would eventually become the strongest incentive to his *rising*'.⁵⁶²

Yet by the time the Catholics seized on 'organisation' as their watchword, the traditional approach of the COS had been for years subject to attack and was becoming increasingly discredited. During the 1880s the more radical members of its leadership had broken away, beginning to consider, for example, the introduction of non-contributory pensions for those among the poor who had reached the age of sixty without recourse to the workhouse: in short they had become, as Stedman Jones has argued, more willing to perceive the respectable working-classes, as distinct from the 'residuum', as having legitimate grievances.⁵⁶³ Correspondingly, the emphasis they placed on the personal influence of the wealthy on the poor also declined, as they realised the necessity for enlisting the co-operation of the working-classes themselves in new social measures. In addition to attack from its own more radical wing, the emphasis of the COS on traditional charity and on the necessity for a personal element came under assault from both radicals and conservatives as being increasingly unrealistic in the face of the social crisis of the late 1880s: not because the idea of an 'undeserving' poor died away, but because of the sheer scale of the problem of the poor. The COS, it could be seen, was being left behind by events. Holding, for example, the traditional view on unemployment - that the market must be left to adjust itself - the leaders of the COS felt that Joseph Chamberlain's celebrated Memorandum of 1886 authorising the provision of public relief works for the 'respectable' unemployed, and the Mansion House appeal of the hard winter of 1886 (both supported by Cardinal Manning) set back the work of years: but Chamberlain's method very soon became the *de facto* accepted method of dealing with cyclical and even winter unemployment. The 1890s also saw a softening in the administration of the Poor Law whereby its officers would

⁵⁶¹ *Tablet*, 8/3/1884, p.381

⁵⁶² 'On Some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', p.157

provide outdoor relief, not for strikers themselves as they were able-bodied and refusing to work, but for the distressed wives and families of strikers.

By 1895 there was almost no piece of Catholic writing on the social question which did not include a plea for more 'organisation': it was urged by the conservative and the forward-thinking alike. That the Catholic social workers were finding it was easier to advocate 'organisation' than to bring it about was evident from this very reiteration for the need for it. At the inaugural meeting of the Ladies of Charity in 1900, Fr Walsh described their chief aim as being not so much to 'promote fresh charitable works towards the poor as to organise such charitable work as was already in evidence'.⁵⁶⁴ Hard on the heels of the pleas for organisation came demands - like those Devas had been making for years - for better education of both clergy and laity in the understanding of the whole social question. Thus, Gatty, for example, in the *Tablet*, wondered if there was a chance that those who controlled the curricula in English Catholic colleges, convents, and ecclesiastical seminaries, might find a way of including lectures and classes on the social problems of the age. In this way, Gatty felt, young Catholics might be brought up, to deal with 'Catholic Sociology, not as a spasmodic, emotional, sentimental, feeling, but as a science of life, and part of their intellectual equipment ...'. Gatty, characteristically, drew attention to the changing times, which needed to be taken into consideration. Men and women, he commented, who had grown up in villages or country towns, knowing their neighbours and offering them help in times of poverty or sickness, now 'find themselves in a flat in Kensington, knowing no poor, and only coming into contact with those who wait on them'. Only organisation, and a 'Catholic Scientific Sociology' could prevent such people from viewing the poor as everybody's, and therefore nobody's, object of charity. He added:

'It is no good pleading ... the separate elegant existence; that day is done and over. The issue is too tremendous now, and the problems are too pressing. Of us Catholics great things are expected. The world looks to us, hopes that we shall set the example and lead the way, and those Catholics who are alive to the real state of the case will do well to enrol themselves to active service'.⁵⁶⁵

These words were a clear echo of Manning's words of nearly fifty years before:

⁵⁶³ Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, p.301

⁵⁶⁴ *Tablet*, 5/12/1900, p.931

⁵⁶⁵ *Tablet*, 16/6/1894, p.939

'A new task is before us. The Church has no longer to deal with parliaments and princes, but with the masses and the people. Whether we will or no, this is our work. And for this work we need a new spirit and a new law of life. The refined, gentle, and shrinking character of calm and sheltered days will not stand the brunt of modern democracy'.⁵⁶⁶

Dr Mooney remarked in 'Hindrances to Social Work' that 'for efficient social effort among the working-classes' it was now necessary for 'Catholic public men to master the economic reasoning with which our people are being freely taught and to be prepared to deal with it in its own terms'.⁵⁶⁷ Dr Barry pleaded for the training of students in Catholic colleges in their 'duties of citizenship' in a speech to Conference of the Catholic [Workhouse] Guardians' Association in 1897, and was warmly seconded by Cardinal Vaughan, who regretted the total absence from all colleges of 'any reference to civic duties'.⁵⁶⁸ That there was little practical response to these suggestions can be gauged from the fact that Charles Plater felt the need to make the same appeal in his 'A Plea for Christian Social Action' in the *Month* in April 1908.

A circular distributed at the Catholic Conference of 1894 had stated that 'The Catholic Social Union is not an eleemosynary Society, which might tend to pauperize ...'.⁵⁶⁹ Charles Gatty also emphasised that the CSU was not an eleemosynary society. It was an important point to make as Catholic social workers not only shared the contemporary fear of bringing about any increase in 'dependency' - part of the same anxiety which underlay opposition to the state provision of old-age pensions or subsidised school dinners - but in addition did not want to be accused of creating 'bread and butter Catholics'. Gatty, however, went further. He felt that the condition of the working classes was such that charitable efforts alone were not enough, and that government intervention to regulate the labour market would be necessary. The most important role for 'philanthropy' was to provide moral influences to counteract - as far as possible - the evils arising from the intensity of material distress. Gatty for one had a confidence in 'organisation' wider than in its application to Catholic charitable efforts. Henry Abraham, writing on 'Trades Unionism Among Women in Ireland' for the *Dublin* of July 1891, commented that:

⁵⁶⁶ Quoted in the 'The Catholic Church and the New Age', *Tablet*, 3/1/1885, p.7

⁵⁶⁷ *Tablet*, 15/9/1894, p.422

⁵⁶⁸ Reported in the *Tablet*, 17/7/1897, p.103

⁵⁶⁹ Reported in 'The Catholic Conference of 1894', p.273

'Trade Unionism as a philanthropy is better than charity, as prevention's better than cure; better to house and feed the worker as well as the average horse and dog, than to doctor and bury them when overworking and cold and starvation have done their work; better, as discipline, self-sacrifice, and the larger life are better than dependence. Then, too, Trades Unionism has this great claim - that it reaches that class of poor who are too worthy of charity for charity ever to reach them'.⁵⁷⁰

This last was a point rarely made. It was consistent with their wider avoidance of discussions of gradations of status or poverty within the working-classes that the Catholic writers rarely touched on those groups who were considered not to need poverty, and struggled against the necessity of seeking it. A rare exception came in *Merry England*, where in 'A Christmas Sketch', M.A. Tincker spoke of

'that pitiable class called "decent" which generally means poor; too independent to beg, straining every nerve to live respectably, and making an extra strain to hide the first one; people whose eyes get a little wild at the prospect of sickness, who shudder at the thought of a doctor's bill and workless days, who sometimes stop their toil for the moment, and wonder what may be the meaning of such words as "ease", "contentment", "pleasure"'.⁵⁷¹

It is arguable that it is on the entire issue of 'charity' that the Catholic writers most reveal what seems to be a lack of awareness of certain aspects of modern English life: a lack which, whether resulting from the after-effects of three hundred years of virtual exclusion from the mainstream of English life or from other factors, certainly militated against a more constructive engagement in the debate on the problem of the poor. The main Catholic criticism of traditional charity at this time was not its failure to reach those who might most need it, or even its inadequacy in the face of the size of the problem, but still that if care were not taken in its application, it could tend to 'pauperise'. Even more than this, there was another aspect which the writers did not tackle. While increasingly aware of the detestation the working-classes felt for the Poor Law and their determination to avoid, at all costs, the workhouse, the writers did not fully assimilate the extent to which the idea of private charity was also abhorrent to many of the English working-classes. At the very end of this period Virginia Crawford, reporting on 'Aspects of Charity in Vienna' for the *Month*, regretted that in England the line of demarcation between official action and private charity was so firmly laid down, with the voluntary schools the only obvious area of exception. She extolled the atmosphere in the poor hospitals run by nuns in Vienna where,

⁵⁷⁰ 'Trades Unionism Among Women in Ireland', *Dublin* of July 1891, p.47

⁵⁷¹ 'A Christmas Sketch', *Merry England*, December 1887, p.467

she felt, the inmates had 'no stigma of pauperism'; no rate-supported institution could possibly provide the same atmosphere. She went on to describe the poor-kitchens where everyone from the destitute to the 'respectable' poor could come to get a nourishing meal at a low price. The English, she suggested, were too frightened of damaging the 'self-respect' of the poor, and this stood in the way of such whole-hearted and non-discriminatory charity becoming available, as she longed to see, in England.⁵⁷² Mrs Crawford would not have seen any contradiction between these remarks and her understanding of the reluctance of the poor in England to have recourse to the Poor Law. (She had earlier argued, for example, that depriving those who entered the workhouse through sickness of the vote was an unnecessary humiliation).⁵⁷³ There was, for her, such a distinction between true, personal, Catholic charity, and the impersonal and minimal care arising from Protestantism and 'less eligibility' that the two could not be compared. Even so, she failed to address two fundamental points. How, given the numbers of Catholics in England, were such hospitals to be provided? (She would not have considered the Protestant Churches, even the Protestant religious orders, capable of achieving such results even if they had set out to do so). Secondly, the overwhelming majority of the English people - even the English working-classes - were not Catholic. To many of them, charity was charity, and such fine gradations would not register. With all due acknowledgement of their comparative lack of radicalism, English working-people were already beginning to think in terms of their 'rights'. Essays like Mrs Crawford's on Catholic charity in Vienna could not be more than interesting asides, away from the main debate.

Catholic social efforts of the 1890s were very similar to those of the past, with the shibboleth of 'organisation' bolted on in the hope of rendering them more effective. It is indicative of Catholic confusion at this time over what they could, and should, attempt in the social sphere that despite the early determination of the CSU not to become an 'eleemosynary' society, it soon found itself establishing settlements in the Anglican style, and as a result in the business of almsgiving. Here all the old worries came to the fore. How were the poor to be helped without increasing their dependency or hampering spiritual ministrations by connecting them with material help? The relief of 'the deserving poor, conducted so as to minimise destitution without increasing pauperization, and to result in the permanent amelioration of their condition by helping them to help themselves, is one of

⁵⁷² *Month*, November 1901, pp.465-472

⁵⁷³ *Tablet*, 24/6/1899, pp.979-980

the gravest social problems of our day ...' commented 'M', writing on 'One Aspect of the Catholic Social Union' for the *Month*.⁵⁷⁴ The answer, 'M' concluded, lay in 'more clearly defined principles of action' and - of course - a more efficient organisation by which to carry them out. 'Organisation' would eliminate the sporadic nature of charitable help and the changes brought on by 'egotism', providing some much-needed continuity; the poor, 'M' realised, had enough instability in their lives. The ladies from the West End who formed the settlement volunteers needed to be carefully trained. Direct alms-giving should be limited to finite and special cases such as sickness, and strict records should be kept of methods, amount, and subsequent results, with any difficult cases referred to the priest. In most settlements, no such system existed. 'M' felt that the poor, or '... to avoid an opprobrious term, we will say the lower strata of the working population' (another sign of the changing times - ten or fifteen years before, it would not have occurred to the writer that the term might be resented, still less that he should pander to any such resentment) formed 'a very delicate as well as a very difficult problem'. He concluded that the eyes of non-Catholic workers in the field of social work were upon them and that their actions needed to be 'a fit expression of the attitude of the Catholic Church towards one of the most vital social questions of the present time'. In the early years of the new century the *Downside Review*, which until then had largely confined itself to commenting on the double blow to the poor sustained by loss of the guilds and the monasteries, began to pay attention to the wider question and especially to the Settlement Movement initiated by the Anglicans, in C. J. Fitzgerald's 'An Idea for the Holidays' (April 1903), Father Cuthbert's 'Catholic Ideals in Social Life' (December 1905); and Francis Fleming's 'Our Poor Laws and the Unemployed' (April and July 1906).

In fact the picture of somewhat frenetic activity painted in the journals of Catholic social activity at this time was somewhat misleading. The *Tablet* of this time covered the activities of (amongst others) the following: the Catholic Truth Society (re-founded in 1884); the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants; the Church Library Association (founded in Salford in 1885); the first Catholic home for Waifs and Strays, (opened 1888); the Catholic Needlework Guild, begun in London in August 1887; the Girls' Mutual Aid Society in Manchester (for 'social and religious well-being'), founded in the same month; the St Anselm's Society, which aimed to make good literature available to poor Catholics; the Catholic Society for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Poor; The

⁵⁷⁴ 'One Aspect of the Catholic Social Union', pp.324-327
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Association of the Ladies of Charity, begun in 1900, for prayer, alms-giving and sick-visiting (to work in 'close sympathy' with the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul); the Home for Factory Girls and Working Women at Bow; the International Catholic Association for Befriending Young Girls, the English branch of which was founded in 1899; the Boys' Employment Society (to find the Catholic employers where possible), formed 1887; the Society of St Elizabeth of Hungary; the Catholic Young Mens Societies; the League of the Cross; the Catholic Boys Brigade, founded in 1896; the Ladies of Charity; and, early in the next century, the Catenian Association (a 'brotherhood' of Catholic men) and the Catholic Social Guild.

This apparent whirl of activity disguised the strictly local scope of many of these institutions and the very small numbers involved, both in terms of lay volunteers and of the people they reached. In 'The Work of the Laity' Britten had highlighted the low numbers belonging to the SVP in 1887, citing a total membership of 1,958. Despite the renewed drive for lay social effort in the 1890s, the SVP annual report of 1899 for England claimed only 2025 active, and 1032 honorary, members.⁵⁷⁵ In 1898 the Catholic Social Union, accounted a considerable success in its early years, reckoned itself to be in touch with just under 2000 young people who had just left school.⁵⁷⁶ Even given that the Union's influence would also have reached their families, this was the proverbial drop in the ocean. By these standards, the Catholic Needlework Guild founded by James Britten was a great success, achieving 202 branches, 6,384 members and 2,049 associate members by 1891.⁵⁷⁷ The duties imposed on its members, however, were merely to provide two garments each year for the poor.

The last years of the 1890s saw a greater willingness to admit that Catholics were being left behind by other Churches in their commitment to social work. Speaking on 'The Catholic Social Union' to the Catholic Conference of 1894, Austin Oates remarked that the dearth of personal service among the Catholic laity was only heightened by its marked contrast with the devoted self-sacrifice of the clergy and Religious Orders.⁵⁷⁸ In a speech on 'The Future of Workhouse Girls' to the 1898 Catholic Conference, Mrs Katherine Parr remarked that: 'If the Catholic laity worked as the Protestant laity work England would now be in a very

⁵⁷⁵ Reported in the *Tablet*, 18/3/1899, p.420

⁵⁷⁶ *Tablet*, 19/3/1898, pp.897-898

⁵⁷⁷ Britten's own figures, reported in the *Tablet*, 11/7/1891, p.81

different condition, and we should not have such appalling statistics of leakage'. She added, 'What is the use of *praying* for the conversion of England if we don't *work* for the conversion of England? ... Faith without works is dead'.⁵⁷⁹ 'A Correspondent' (almost certainly Charles Gatty), commenting on the report of the Catholic Social Union for the year ending July 1899 in the *Tablet*, remarked that it was to be hoped that the Catholic Church in England would never be judged by the measure of personal service undertaken by its lay members. If she was, the verdict would be a damning one, 'and without extenuating circumstances, unless the noble, devoted, and self-denying labours of the few - so very few - are taken into consideration'.⁵⁸⁰ Lay social effort in the 1890s was indeed over-reliant on the efforts of a few important figures like James Britten and Austin Oates. This was also true at a local level. As Doyle has shown, in Halifax, for example, one affluent and hard-working lay convert, James Lister, founded the Catholic Guild of St Joseph and the Holy Cross and the Halifax Catholic Registration Society, was Secretary of the Halifax Catholic Working Mens Association, patron and benefactor of an Industrial School on his estate at Shibden, and supported the Cocoa House Movement.⁵⁸¹ (Lister was a pioneer among Catholic social workers, being prepared as early as the 1870s to work with, and copy, non-Catholic charitable enterprises). The new or revitalised social efforts of the 1890s - almost all of which were started by or received crucial input from Cardinals Manning and Vaughan - depended on the same few members of the laity for their day-to-day running; and as the *Tablet's* correspondent implied, there also seems to have been considerable 'overlap' among the other, less well-known, volunteers. Moreover, these renewed efforts, like those of the Anglican Church, were resolutely paternalistic and conservative. Almost all were founded in direct imitation or response to secular or Anglican institutions already proving successful. There was nothing uniquely Catholic on offer, and no radical departure from the charitable efforts of an earlier age. A glance at *The Laity's Directory* for 1819 for purposes of comparison shows this very clearly. Boys Brigades, Commercial Employment Associations and the like were of course products of the 1890s: but in size and scope the Catholic lay social effort had not much advanced on the provision of schools, orphanages and hospitals of the early post-Emancipation era.

⁵⁷⁸ Reported in the *Tablet*, 15/9/1894, pp.417-419

⁵⁷⁹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 3/9/1898, p.383

⁵⁸⁰ *Tablet*, 7/10/1899, p.579

⁵⁸¹ Doyle, 'Catholics and the Social Question', *op. cit.*, p.68

A more accurate picture of the impact of the new push for lay involvement can be gleaned from the correspondence pages of the *Tablet*, which often provided glimpses of the life 'on the ground' which were in somewhat stark contrast with the rhetoric of the Catholic writers. Here was a taste of some specific results of Catholic social action and inaction. In an appeal for £1,400 to keep the Catholic schools in West Ham open, the correspondent, Andrew Dooley, pointed out that at the recent elections,

'the Socialist member by excellence of the late Parliament was ignominiously routed by the Catholic electors of this borough from the representation of South-West Ham. Mr Keir Hardie's majority of nearly 1,300 was turned into a minority of 700 odd, and it was from the Catholic schools of Canning Town that the word of victory went forth. Here it was, at a public meeting, that we apprised our people of that gentleman's unsound and pernicious tenets ... Mr Keir Hardie will be entitled to exult over me and my flock if the poor schools which sealed his Parliamentary doom are suffered to be closed by your wealthy individualist readers'.⁵⁸²

Even when Catholics became, reluctantly and very gradually, more ready to admit the helplessness of traditional charity in the face of the scale of the problem of the poor, they did not turn their attention to suggesting legislative measures of their own to counteract it, or attempt to organise Catholic support for those legislative measures already being mooted. The Catholic social effort in England reflected neither Catholic efforts on the continent nor the activities of the other Churches at home. They did not consider proffering practical suggestions such as those suggested, for example, by Canon Scott Holland's Christian Socialist Union, which began consumers' 'white lists' which encouraged members to buy only from firms which had adopted acceptable trade-union wage rates, as a weapon against 'sweating'; and also sent reports on working conditions to the Government.⁵⁸³ Despite the emphasis throughout this era on the benefits of rural life for the poor, it was not until the depression of the 1930s that a Catholic association to encourage movement 'back to the land' - the Catholic Land Federation - was formed, in an attempt to create small-scale co-operative farming communities. There are instructive glimpses in the journals of some modern advances coming about almost of their own volition. The Catholic Needlework Guild, formed so that the better-off could sew useful garments for the poor, soon found itself not merely buying boots for poor needlewomen, but also employing the women itself in order to save them from unemployment or from 'sweated' labour.

⁵⁸² *Tablet*, 3/8/1895, p.183

The idea that voluntary and charitable efforts might still render legislative measures unnecessary was still clung to, even by those Catholic writers who were in other ways comparatively advanced in their thinking. A leading article on 'The East End and the Catholic Social Union' in the *Tablet* of 9/2/1895, by a writer under the pseudonym of 'Memor', marked a new departure by reflecting on the effects of unemployment on the *personality* of a workman:

'A sense of uselessness must undermine self-respect ... the only pedestal upon which his social dignity rests, and when that crumbles everything falls in one general ruin ... before long his deterioration ceases to be merely industrial and becomes moral also. Not only the workman suffers but the man'.⁵⁸⁴

Significantly, 'Memor' was writing, not of the artisan class, but of the 'ordinary' workman. He went on to point out that, while the tradition was to adjure thrift in the 'good' times, for those who endured weeks out of work alternating with brief periods in work, this was impractical: 'Thrift at such a moment, even if it were possible, implies a degree of self-restraint belonging only to a very high moral standard'. Similarly, 'Memor' spoke of the frantic endeavour of the periodically unemployed to escape destitution, to keep the 'home' together even if all its contents had been pawned, and at all costs to avoid the 'house'. This, he argued, was 'inexpressibly touching': it was 'the passionate assertion of the workman to his right to the dignity of bread-winner, it is the last protest of a tottering self-respect against what is most mistakenly, though almost invincibly conceived of as, short of crime, the lowest rung in the ladder of degradation'. At last workers, other than the skilled elite, were allowed to have self-respect. Similarly, Virginia Crawford protested against the political disenfranchisement of those who have recourse to the Poor Law because of sickness. This deprivation, she observed, was part and parcel of the old theory that 'assistance from the rates, under whatever circumstances, was necessarily degrading; but today the anomaly is so grotesque ... that we may surely hope for a modification of the law in this respect'.⁵⁸⁵ These views were still exceptional. More typically, Ada Streeter in 'Some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed' argued that skilled workmen had more to lose, and therefore suffered more in a given time from temporary lack of unemployment than the habitually unemployed - rather contradicting her own and others' picture of

⁵⁸³ Jones, *op. cit.*, p.183

⁵⁸⁴ *Tablet*, 9/2/1895, p.205

provident artisans putting something by against hard times.⁵⁸⁶ However a year later, she commented on the loss of prestige felt by unskilled labourers when employment obliged them to depend on their wives going out to work.⁵⁸⁷ 'Memor', commented that while unemployment was industrial in origin and therefore could not be remedied by philanthropic efforts alone, it was 'both moral and social in its effects, and the influences which religion and philanthropy may bring to bear on these efforts may, to a great extent modify, if not transform them'.⁵⁸⁸

The programme content of the 1898 Catholic Conference held at Nottingham reveals the degree of concentration on the problem of the poor at the end of this period. The programme, as outlined by the *Tablet*, included Devas on 'The Meaning and Aim of Social Democracy'; Fr Aidan Gasquet on 'Christian Democracy in the Pre-reformation Period'; Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham on 'The Principles of Justice in the Letting of Land'; and Mrs Parr on 'The After-Life of Workhouse Girls'.⁵⁸⁹ On the papers given by Gasquet and Devas, the *Tablet* commented: 'The ability of the two latter to treat the subject from their respective points of view is too well-known to our readers to require to be reiterated'. It was an admission, tactfully expressed, of the fact that by 1898 both Devas and Gasquet had long since fully elaborated their theories on the social questions: both continued to publish and to lecture, but neither found anything new to contribute. (A glimpse of the ongoing confusion over the term 'Socialism' was given by the *Tablet* in commenting on Gasquet's paper, which it printed in full: 'About all this matter opinions differ very widely indeed; and although, I suppose, we may all of us, in these days, claim to be socialists of some kind or type ...').⁵⁹⁰ There had been some minor developments in Devas's thinking. In a lecture to the Manchester Statistical Society on 'Statistical Aspects of Wealth and Welfare', he spoke of the need for studies of 'the influence of contentment, leisure and domestic happiness on the wealth-producing faculties, and how the efficiency of industry is affected by raising the character of civic life'.⁵⁹¹ (It was a sign of the changing times that in the same lecture, in which he painted a somewhat idealised life of the Lancashire cotton-weavers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Devas had a word of praise for

⁵⁸⁵ *Tablet*, 24/6/1899, pp.979-980

⁵⁸⁶ 'On Some Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed', pp.155-156

⁵⁸⁷ 'The East End', *Month*, February 1895, pp.205-207

⁵⁸⁸ *Tablet*, 9/2/1895, p.206

⁵⁸⁹ *Tablet*, 3/9/1898, pp.375-384 and 389-395

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.365

⁵⁹¹ *Tablet*, 16/12/1899, p.979

Methodism and its good effects on the lives of the workers). However there were no important departures or developments in Devas's work and there was no Catholic political economist of standing in the 1890s to succeed him. Still less did a major figure emerge to fill the greater gap left by Manning.

Britten, commenting on *Realities at Home* for the *Month*, cited examples of increased Catholic social activity over the previous twenty years but acknowledged the criticism of the general lack of activity among the laity and especially among male lay Catholics. He still needed to ask, as he had fifteen years before, 'How are the laity to be stirred up to take their share in the work of bringing people "back to the Churches"? That is the problem we have to face'.⁵⁹² They had been moved neither by the weight of information put forward on the condition of the poor nor the earnest appeals made by Cardinal Vaughan and others for their help. In 'An Idea for the Holidays' in the *Downside*, C. J. Fitzgerald remarked that while 'The Catholic gentry ought to be in the forefront of every movement to raise the working classes' they were not conspicuous in their 'grasp of social problems, their knowledge of the conditions under which the poor live, or their efforts to effect amendment'. He went on to acknowledge that the Anglican settlement movement was setting Roman Catholics an example, while for their own part they could only point to the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the members of which were 'none too numerous': yet the problem of the poor was of the utmost urgency and importance to their country and to their religion.⁵⁹³

In the 1890s Catholic social effort was still proscribed by certain traditional limits. Virginia Crawford summed up the prevailing picture well when she admitted that:

'Charity, both in the sense of giving alms and of personal service, has never been lacking among Catholics, but social reform, whether economic, industrial, or political, has been too often ignored, even by those who had the welfare of the people closely at heart. The whole of the Christian democratic movement on the Continent is based on this fact. It has inaugurated a wider and truer conception of the relation of Christian effort towards the material conditions of modern existence. It has thrown down the somewhat narrow limits within which active charity was in the habit of confining itself, and it has brought to the task an invigorating love of justice, and a renewed faith in the potency of the Catholic ideal'.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹² *Realities at Home*, p.345

⁵⁹³ 'An Idea for the Holidays', *Downside*, April 1903, p.64

⁵⁹⁴ 'Ideals of Charity', p.460

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Attitudes at the end of the 1890s

At first glance, the Roman Catholic stance on the social question in the periodicals of 1900 seemed remarkably similar to that of 1880. To an extent this was true - especially in the opposition to legislative intervention by the state, which persisted, despite some softening of attitudes on 'ameliorating' measures of social legislation. In particular, the lack of success achieved by Cardinal Manning in promoting the cause of the poor as one of urgent and central interest to his Church was striking. He could never stir his co-religionists to make the effort he thought required of them, and on his death in 1892 he left no 'Manningite' pressure group behind him. Nevertheless, the two decades had witnessed heated and deeply-felt debate and despite the intrinsically conservative nature of English Catholicism, it has been seen that some important shifts can be demonstrated in the traditional stance.

It was not, of course, only among Catholics that traditional, conservative attitudes were still thriving in 1900. The volume of print devoted to the problem of the poor and the willingness of the secular and religious press to engage in the debate on Socialism can tend to obscure the essentially conservative attitudes which continued to prevail throughout the 1880s and 1890s. It was one thing for Sir William Harcourt to remark wryly to the House of Commons (as he famously did, in 1889) that 'We are all Socialists now': most social campaigners still took care to disassociate themselves from Socialism. As Holbrook Jackson commented, looking back in 1913 on the 1890s, 'it must not be forgotten that it was a much more daring thing to announce oneself a Socialist then than now - it was almost as daring as for a middle-class girl to go out unchaperoned, and shocked almost as much'.⁵⁹⁵ Devas clearly felt that those, like he, who argued that political economy was necessarily a branch of ethics had won their case: Dr Barry doubted it, and he was perhaps more realistic. In 'Labour and Capital, Limited' he warned that Devas was over-optimistic: 'Malthus will require daily to be slain, like the warriors of Odin in Valhalla'.⁵⁹⁶ As Lynd has observed, the influential *Economist*, for example, was in 1890 still opposing the idea of

⁵⁹⁵ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen-Nineties*, p.133

⁵⁹⁶ 'Labour and Capital, Limited', p.346

legislation to regulate hours or wages as an unthinkable invasion of individual freedom.⁵⁹⁷ The 1880s and 1890s have been seen as the era in which those focusing on the problem of the poor moved their concentration away from individual moral failure to concentrate on an economic system ranged against the poor: nothing less than the change from the 'problem of the poor' to 'the problem of poverty'. While a profound shift was indeed taking place, when the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909 found itself divided, it was the majority who still saw dependence on relief as the result of moral failure, and felt that charitable organisations should play a leading role in poor relief, and the minority who thought in terms of a range of social and economic measures aimed at preventing poverty.

The impression formed by the leaders of the working-classes of the essentially conservative nature of the attitude of the Churches to the social problem remained. As Mayor has observed, the rise of the settlement movement, for example, only served to reinforce the idea that 'the function of the Church, even at its most progressive, was to provide first-aid behind the fighting lines, while more worldly minded agencies led the advance'.⁵⁹⁸ Yet 'first-aid behind fighting lines', or what is known as 'last-resort responsibility' in the areas of pauperism or public health was still also the government position. Nevertheless, there was indeed an 'advance' being led by the 'more worldly minded agencies', and the Catholic Church in England was neither contributing to it, opposing it, or providing an alternative and convincing way forward. Any impression that by the time of his death Cardinal Manning had led the Catholics in England to a radical outlook is not borne out by the evidence of the five journals under consideration. Manning failed to move the Church in England to the 'Manningite' position on the problem of the poor. Such an assertion in no way underestimates the impact of his social work and teaching on many individuals both within his Church and outside it: he was, in McClelland's useful phrase, a 'guru' on the social question,⁵⁹⁹ and it is always difficult to quantify the impact of a guru, but that many individuals became thoroughgoing 'Manningites' (in his lifetime and afterwards) is apparent even from a Catholic press often less than whole-heartedly supportive of his stance on social issues.

⁵⁹⁷ Lynd, *op. cit.*, p.165

⁵⁹⁸ Mayor, *op. cit.*, p.63

⁵⁹⁹ V. Alan McClelland, *Henry Edward Manning and the Rights and Dignity of Labour*, (London, 1962), p.201

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that Manning was perceived as a radical, not only by his own co-religionists, but by his contemporaries in general, it is true that in the years immediately after Manning's death some of the views he had held for decades gradually became Catholic orthodoxy. While Catholic writers continued to argue that Socialists had deprived the poor of their greatest chance of comfort by shifting their attention to the current life from the life to come, they had less to say on the duty of the poor to be content with their lot. Manning had met the arguments of those who asserted that it was the Church's duty to teach the poor to be resigned to their allotted condition of life by asserting that 'Where there is no proportion, or no known proportion, between enormous and increasing profits and scanty and stationary wages, to be contented is to be superhuman'.⁶⁰⁰ This perspective, in itself an echo of Ruskin's comment that 'There are perhaps some circumstances in life in which Providence has no intention that people should be content',⁶⁰¹ had been accepted by John S. Vaughan, for one, by 1894: he acknowledged that an 'enormous section of the nation, which is living, if a not in a state of pinching poverty, at least in a condition so perilously approaching it, that any other feeling but one of rooted discontent must be humanly impossible'.⁶⁰² There are many instances of 'Manningism' among less well-known figures: in a paper on 'The Church and the Labour Struggle', for example, read to the Annual Conference of Catholic Young Men's Societies in 1894, Mr J.A. Doughan quoted Manning's statement that Christianity demanded for the worker a sufficient remuneration to enable him to provide sufficient sustenance for his family, and sufficient leisure to permit him to guide the upbringing of his children, and then went on to argue the case for Catholics taking part in the organisation of trades unions.⁶⁰³

At the end of this era temperance was still seen as an essential prerequisite for working-class solvency but there had been an important shift in perspective, with drink increasingly being seen as an effect rather than a root cause of poverty: again, a Manningite view. It is significant that *Rerum novarum*, with all its emphasis on thrift and 'frugality' made not one direct reference to temperance. An anonymous reviewer in the *Month* of February 1879, touching on a discussion on the alcohol question in a recent number of the *Contemporary Review*, had remarked: 'It is scarcely enough to tell a poor man to drink water unless we

⁶⁰⁰ 'Leo XIII on "The Condition of Labour"', p.163

⁶⁰¹ Ruskin, *op. cit.*, p.226.

⁶⁰² 'The Social Difficulty', p.42

provide him with water which it is possible to drink. It appears that the water supplied to the poor in London is not much, or nice, or good ... but these are economic questions and apart from the main discussion'.⁶⁰⁴ If the Catholic input into political or practical measures of social reform had not progressed as far over the ensuing twenty years as Manning would have wished, at least the attitudes behind this tone of lofty detachment had begun to crumble. By 1900 even the most reluctant were beginning to acknowledge that these economic questions could not be dismissed as 'apart from the main discussion'. The 1890s also saw an increased willingness among Catholics to borrow from the methods of the Anglicans and even the Nonconformists, as Manning had done in the 1860s with his League of the Cross, thereby scandalising many Catholics. There was a clearly discernible shift from the beginning of the period, when in, for example, 'Catholic Reform' in the *Month* of January 1884, A.J. Christie had argued that 'no man can deserve the name of a true reformer unless he aims at perfection', and that modern-day Catholics should follow the example of the early Christians in setting out to reform the world, and let their system be distinguished 'By its exclusiveness;- by its uncompromisingness'. If, he had argued, a new convert from Paganism had been tempted 'to connive at the religious around, to enlist their aid in ameliorating the condition of mankind; how would such a proposal have been received by the true reformers, by the Apostles? It would have been simply scouted'. Catholicity could not 'make terms with falsehood ... God's voice must be obeyed in obeying the spiritual pastors at the head of Christianity'. The only social or political activity in which a Catholic could safely engage was 'to aim at the restoration of that which once was and has passed away'. Even if it were not to be restored, 'he will be acting on right principle and - more souls will be saved, than by the advocacy of so-called, liberal institutions'.⁶⁰⁵ Christie insisted that 'More good by far is done by aiming at the Right and Good than by half-measures and patchwork legislation'.⁶⁰⁶

Against the relaxation of certain of the old attitudes, there are brief but salutary glimpses to be had throughout the *Tablet* of the essential conservatism, on the social problem as well as on science, of the Roman Catholic clergy at parish level. C. Rayleigh Chichester in a letter to the *Tablet* arguing that any better understanding among Catholics of the social question must be led by the clergy, remarked that 'To many priests, possibly to most', the very

⁶⁰³ *Tablet*, 9/8/1890, p.222

⁶⁰⁴ *Month*, February 1879, p.293

⁶⁰⁵ 'Catholic Reform', pp.37-40

mention of political economy was 'odious'.⁶⁰⁷ It is also apparent from the journals - especially the *Tablet* - that Catholics were still not playing their part in local government and public bodies. 'A Catholic Layman' wrote to the *Tablet* of 24/1/1885 to suggest that in order to remedy 'this dereliction of duty', the clergy might 'urge and encourage our leading Catholics (of both sexes) to take their position in the various fields of public life, which are now open to them'.⁶⁰⁸ At the Catholic Guardians' Association of 1899, Mrs Crawford appealed for more Catholics to come forward to offer themselves as workhouse guardians or to 'befriend' the workhouse inmates.⁶⁰⁹ In the first of three articles for the *Dublin* on 'Religious Influences in London', Henry Norbert Birt⁶¹⁰ cited (April 1905) Charles Booth's description (in his *Life and Labour of the London Poor*) of the Italian (Catholic) Church in Hatton Garden, London: 'remarking on the absence of social organisations, Mr Booth says: "The priests do not consider it their business to provide them. They might, perhaps, regard such influences as leading them away from the ideas which they hold up"'.⁶¹¹

When the renewed social effort by the laity for which Manning had so long urged came about in the 1890s, it was very limited in size and was the practical response to an immediate problem - the 'leakage' away from the Faith, especially in specific cases where young Catholics were being attracted by successful Clubs run by Protestant or non-denominational organisations - rather than the result of a sea-change in attitudes. The 1890s certainly witnessed the victory (even if rather a theoretical one, given the level of lay social action) of those who argued that a certain degree of 'Civilization' would advance - might even be a prerequisite for - 'Christianization'. Most importantly, Cardinal Vaughan, although far from being a convert to Manningism on the social question, was at least a convert to the arguments for 'Civilization' and to a pragmatic response to the 'leakage'. The real failure of 'Manningism' was not that the Church in England declined to be converted to the Cardinal's (fairly radical) policies, but in that he could not bring his co-religionists to share his belief in the *centrality* of the problem of the poor to their Faith. Social work aimed at staying the 'leakage' might save the souls of those who might

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.41

⁶⁰⁷ *Tablet*, 26/7/1890, p.142

⁶⁰⁸ *Tablet*, 24/1/1885, p.139

⁶⁰⁹ Reported in the *Tablet* of 24/6/1899, p.979

⁶¹⁰ Henry Norbert Birt was at that time Secretary to Dr Gasquet in his role as President of the English Benedictines. He was an active member of the CTS and also contributed to the *Tablet* and the *Downside*, and to the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* of 1907-12.

⁶¹¹ 'Religious Influences in London', pt. one, *Dublin*, April 1905, p.306

otherwise have been lost to the Church. This must always be the first consideration; but it was not quite the same thing as a belief that the fair and compassionate treatment of the working-classes as a whole was vital to anyone calling himself a Christian. Although he was never a part of the Christian Socialist movement, Manning shared the Christian Socialist feeling that the way in which the poor were obliged to live and work must be of fundamental importance to those professing Christianity. As Jones has observed, many Christian Socialists felt that it was impossible to be 'Christian' without also being 'Socialist'. In Headlam's words, it became impossible for a priest, 'who knows what the Lord's supper means, not to take part to the best of his power in every work of political or social emancipation: impossible for an earnest communicant not to be an earnest politician'.⁶¹² As McClelland has observed, for Cardinal Manning the Church's divine mission was inextricably bound up with its social action.⁶¹³ Manning remarked again and again, for example, that the modern way of treating the contract of labour as so much buying and selling of goods was heresy. He saw the condition of the poor as a sin and the shame, not of the poor themselves, but of wider society and especially for Roman Catholics. Manning was here supported by Bishop Bagshawe, who stated in 'Mercy and Justice to the Poor' that 'the principle that the State has a duty to foster, regulate, and protect the industry of its subjects, and to defend the poor from being ruined by the tyrannous caprices of wealth, is a true and sound principle of theology, and one of the greatest possible importance to society'.⁶¹⁴ Shortly before his death Manning wrote to W.S. Lilly on the publication of *Shibboleths*, Lilly's critique of conventional society and political economy:

'In its denunciation of the material, mechanical, modern, individualistic political economy, I sympathise altogether. Lord Salisbury and Mr Giffen resented my calling it 'heartless and headless'. Your chapter [on political economy] says what I mean ... This abolition of the moral law is atheism in fact and deed'.⁶¹⁵

Bishop Bagshawe agreed with the verdict of the *Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques d'Ouvriers* that modern theories on the market-place were 'social heresy'.⁶¹⁶ Dr Barry concurred, but most Catholic writers stopped short of referring to heresy. When later, in his *The Priest and Social Action* of 1914, Charles Plater sought to convince the clergy of

⁶¹² Jones, *op. cit.*, p.161

⁶¹³ McClelland, (*Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence*), *op. cit.*, p.129

⁶¹⁴ Bagshawe, *op. cit.*, p.21

⁶¹⁵ Quoted in '*Shibboleths: Mr Lilly's Book on Politics*', p.437

the urgency and centrality of the need for active social work, he took three approaches: an appeal to authority; the value social action would have for their spiritual mission; and from the demands of Christian charity. As Doyle has shown, he found it difficult to prove that there was a genuine obligation binding the clergy as opposed to strong recommendations.⁶¹⁷

Christian Socialists such as Stewart Headlam and Canon Barnett believed that active work to improve the material welfare of the people, far from being a turning away from the spiritual life of the Church, was carrying Christian ideals into practice. The Guild of St Matthew grew directly out of Headlam's belief that the growth of atheism was a result of the secular work of the Church having been neglected: it could not have come about if the Christian Church had made itself recognised 'as a society for the promotion of righteousness in this world'.⁶¹⁸ Manning also shared with the Christian Socialists the belief that the Church had been damaged by being overly associated with the ruling classes and the established order. Roman Catholics could (and did) lay the blame for the rise in irreligion at the door of Protestantism, but as Manning's modern historians have all observed, he saw the Catholic Church as making the same mistake as he had recognised in the Established Church in his Anglican days: it had become too firmly aligned with the ruling classes and with the *status quo*. In the challenge presented by the rising democracy he saw, not a threat, but an opportunity for the Church not to be missed: 'Hitherto the world has been governed by dynasties; henceforth the Holy See will have to deal with the people ...'.⁶¹⁹ In the words of his disciple on the social question, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, 'Finally, the Church ... must either rest upon the people or condemn herself to death'.⁶²⁰ This attitude led to accusations of 'opportunism' from those, both in and out of the Church, who mistrusted or misunderstood Manning. The *Times* remarked of *Rerum Novarum* that it was an attempt by the Church to win 'the confidence and affection of the masses; that is to say, of the heritors and future distributors of power. It is a great opportunity, and of course it could not be missed'.⁶²¹ The general Catholic view was that 'opportunism' was an Anglican error - after all, the editors of *Lux Mundi* had stated that on the question of the 'best form of government ... the Church is frankly opportunistic'. The

⁶¹⁶ Bagshawe, *op. cit.*, p.27

⁶¹⁷ Doyle, ('Charles Plater SJ ...'), *op. cit.*, p.407

⁶¹⁸ Jones, *op. cit.*, p.112

⁶¹⁹ Printed in the *Tablet*, 7/5/1887, p.740

⁶²⁰ *Tablet*, 28/2/1891, p.334

Catholic Church should not risk being tarred by its opponents with the opportunist brush. In all the concern expressed in the journals over the leakage, there is little suggestion that the drift away from the Faith might be connected with the lack of Catholic political and social involvement. Dr Barry, as so often, was one exception, feeling as he did that preaching which did not strike at the root of social injustice would not stay the leakage.

Manning was such a major figure in the debate surrounding the problem of the poor, and by so far the leading Catholic figure, that historians have not uncommonly tended to assume that all the new Catholic social efforts of the 1890s and the early twentieth century arose as the direct result of his work and influence. Hilton, for example, has seen the creation of the Catholic Social Guild (founded in 1909) and the Catholic Workers' College at Oxford (founded by the CSG in 1921 and later re-named Plater Hall) in this light.⁶²² Yet both bodies might equally well be cited as evidence of the failure of the Manningite social perspective within the Church. The CSG, which tried both to interest Catholics in their social duties and to persuade non-Catholics that the Catholic Church could provide the principles upon which society can be reformed, met with very limited success, while Plater's need to found a separate college for 'social studies' was, after all, a sign that the subject had not become an inevitable part of the curriculum in Catholic schools or colleges, just as the welfare of the poor *en masse* had not become part of the essential core of Catholic belief.

There was another way in which the Catholic journals of the 1890s and early twentieth-century failed to reflect the ideas of Manning: their discussion of the social question moved firmly back to the *Catholic* poor, to what was to be done for and about the Catholic poor to raise them from the lowest to the higher ranks of the working-classes, and of course, to reduce the leakage, rather than to the question of the poor - still less, of poverty - in general. Manning, with his concern for the poor as a whole, had taken a broader picture, and with his death the English Catholics seemed to have lost this overview. As the *Tablet* quoted, reporting the founding of the Catholic Commercial Employment Association, 'Charity begins at home'.⁶²³ It is on this point that the difference in emphasis between Cardinals Manning and Vaughan on the problem of the poor, which is at once apparent and

⁶²¹ Reported in the *Tablet*, 6/6/1891, pp.894-895

⁶²² Hilton, *op. cit.*, p.101

⁶²³ *Tablet*, 9/6/1894, p.896

yet hard to define, becomes a little more distinct. That they had different ideas of the priest's role was obvious from Vaughan's well-known comments on Manning's part in resolving the 1889 Dock Strike. It would be unfair to Vaughan to conclude that he was simply less concerned than Manning for the poor and of course risible to suggest that one was more concerned than the other to save their souls. Yet Manning might be said to have lacked Vaughan's sense of exclusiveness. There is an illuminating anecdote, recounted by Snead-Cox in his biography of Cardinal Vaughan, which describes how Manning arranged for Vaughan to make a visit to a Salvation Army night hostel, with Wilfrid Meynell as his escort. The visit would, Manning told Meynell, 'open Herbert's eyes'. However, according to Meynell, Vaughan demanded of the hostel supervisor, 'Are there any of my people here?' and went on to question him about the nature of the religious services at the hostel. Characteristically his concern was to establish whether - as Manning had assured him - the hostel services were truly undenominational, rather than to enquire into the work of the hostel or the lives of those who found themselves obliged to lodge there.⁶²⁴

As Mayor has observed, this retraction into their own concerns was not confined to Catholicism but rather was a characteristic of all the churches at the start of the twentieth century: he has described this as 'the real decline of religion - not merely the declining statistics of church attendance, but the contraction of interest and scope ...'.⁶²⁵ As Pereiro has observed, the early years of the twentieth century, which some have viewed in a positive light as a time of consolidation, have equally been seen as a time of increasing insularity for the Catholic Church in England.⁶²⁶ Hickey, in describing the efforts of the Catholic trades unionists early in the twentieth century, has remarked that they were regarded as 'the struggle of a pressure group to exert influence for their own ends and as further evidence of the separateness of the Catholic group from its non-Catholic environment'.⁶²⁷ Catholic 'apartness' in socio-political matters continued even after the Settlement in Ireland of 1922 which meant that at last Home Rule was no longer the inevitable and defining issue for Catholics of Irish descent. However, the 1920s and 1930s also saw clashes between working and middle-class Catholics and leaders of the Church, over Socialistic policies on such issues as birth-control and the Spanish Civil War.

⁶²⁴ Snead-Cox, *op. cit.* pp.481-482

⁶²⁵ Mayor, *op. cit.*, p.79

⁶²⁶ Pereiro, *op. cit.* p.173

Perhaps most significantly of all, while the Catholics acknowledged the immense scale and complexity of the 'problem of the poor', they remained aloof from any moves to join pressure for social legislation. Parish priests like Father James Nugent, Liverpool's 'Apostle of Temperance', spent their lives in devoted service to the Catholic poor, struggling to provide them with schools and orphanages and keep them out of prostitution and the prisons, without looking for any measures to help, beyond the traditional charitable social work and almsgiving. The general Catholic view seems to have been broadly that of Fr Rickaby, who felt that State interference to rectify the great and 'wrongful' inequality of wealth between the rich and the poor 'is of the nature of a surgical operation, to be dispensed with where not necessary. It exhausts and weakens the commonwealth; and, recklessly applied, the remedy may hinder a recovery which would have gradually taken place without it ...'.⁶²⁸

The old reliance on individual 'charity', albeit with the new stress on organisation, persisted: as can be seen in, for example, Leslie Toke's article on 'Some Ways and Means of Social Study', in the *Downside Review* of March 1907. Toke, a convert from Rationalism, was later involved with Charles Plater and Virginia Crawford in the founding of the Catholic Social Guild. In the *Downside Review* in 1907 his attack on the middle and upper-classes (and especially, the Catholics) for their ignorance of the basic elements of 'social science' and the conditions in which the poor lived, echo those of fifteen and twenty years before. He accused them of being familiar with neither the teachings of the Popes and theologians on social principles nor the results of social experiments, and for remaining complacently assured that there was no need for them 'to make any social effort other than the indiscriminate bestowal of arms and of patronage'. Catholic charities were excellent, 'but in activities that are rather reformatory than charitable, Catholics have not yet taken the position due both to their numbers and to their social importance'. Such was the degree of ignorance that the Catholic Social Union (by this time already defunct) had been shunned by some because of a supposed association with 'Socialism', while the recent death of Charles Devas had deprived them of the only English Catholic economist of standing. Finally, he echoed Abbot Snow's comments in the same journal twelve years earlier (in 'A Glimpse at Socialism'), in comparing well-to-do Catholics, in their lack of interest in the problem of the poor, to the French aristocrats on the eve of the Revolution.

⁶²⁷ Hickey, *op. cit.*, p.150

⁶²⁸ 'Three Socialist Fallacies', p.157

English Catholics had formed the habit of 'incivism', a fact partly excused by their being excluded from civic life for three centuries. The disastrous result, Toke felt, was that Catholics failed to realise that 'Political and social formulae which were advanced and dynamic in the Emancipation period have become the emptiest of reactionary shibboleths today' and to realise 'the fundamental change that has taken place in political, social and economic equations'.⁶²⁹ Toke expressed admiration for Devas, but he clearly did not share his conviction in the fundamentally unchanging times. Rather his comments echo to some degree Dr Barry's comment, in a letter of 1896 to Wilfrid Ward, that he was never present at one of the Catholic conferences, or in a clerical gathering, 'that I do not feel amazed at the isolation from the modern world in which our friends live. They cannot judge it because they do not know it; and their tactics are such as would follow upon this state of mind'.⁶³⁰

One article can be singled out from all the rest as epitomising the broad consensus among Catholics towards the end of this era: 'An Electoral Experiment in Belgium' by Wilfrid C. Robinson, in the *Dublin* of January 1895. This, firstly, serves as a reminder of how beleaguered the Roman Catholic Church still felt in parts of Europe, and how directly it was struggling with Socialism for the allegiance of the working-classes. Robinson observed that in Belgium the only remaining defender of justice was the Church; that the Socialists and Liberals alike were fiercely against religion; and he quoted the Bishop of Liège who remarked, in his 'Pastoral' of January 14th, 1894 on the social question, 'No compromise, no alliance with the Socialists. If they seek some things which are lawful, we need not therefore abstain from seeking them likewise; but we must let them go their way while we pursue ours. Our workmen can only suffer by contact with them'. Next, Robinson went on to remark that Parliament could help to combat the rise of Socialism by measures to ameliorate the lot of the working-classes: 'It can help the Government in keeping order in the streets, it can frame laws to lighten the burdens of the working classes, it can give them more comfortable dwellings ...'.⁶³¹ Here was evidence of the gradual shift which has taken place in Catholic feeling on social legislation. However, Robinson concluded, it was outside Parliament the best work must be and was being done, by the Catholics of Belgium:

⁶²⁹ 'Some Ways and Means of Social Study', pp.38-39

⁶³⁰ Dr Barry to Wilfrid Ward, 9 March 1896; quoted in Gilley, ('Father William Barry ...'), *op. cit.*, p.543

⁶³¹ 'An Electoral Experiment in Belgium', *Dublin*, January 1895, p.118

‘In the oldest and most picturesque part of the old city of Bruges may be seen a row of ancient edifices recently restored. It is the habitation of the Guild of *Ambachten* or Trades. The buildings are the gift of one of the Senators of the city, and are the trysting-place of masters and men where they may meet to settle their affairs - where with recreation they may combine business, where the labourer may hear of work, where he may put away his hard-earned savings in a popular bank, where he may get help to buy his needful tools, and where by useful lectures and popular journals he may learn sound doctrines and obtain useful knowledge. It is by the multiplication of such institutes, and actively helping in their working, that Belgian Catholics seek at Bruges and throughout their land to solve the social problem...’⁶³²

This was a picture which (to say nothing of the archaic terminology) could, like Virginia Crawford’s description of the poor-hospitals of Vienna, have very little relevance to the bulk of the English working classes at the end of the nineteenth century.

Charles Plater, although in some ways a radical among Catholic social workers - at least, among English Catholic social workers - was himself an illuminating example of the way in which some of the old attitudes persisted. His most significant advance was in understanding the vital importance of working with the working-classes and in enlisting their support. As Doyle has remarked, Plater ‘implied but was too careful to say’ that the clergy had fallen into a habit of underestimating their people, and maintaining their traditionally paternalist approach, when they should instead be aware of the ‘cherished aspirations’ of young men who should be looked upon as potential Catholic leaders and lay apostles. In an article entitled ‘A Plea for Christian Social Action’ for the *Month* of April 1908, he had argued (like Britten and Gatty before him) the need for a sound Catholic social literature and for organised social study clubs, so that Catholic working-men could hold their own in argument with socialist colleagues. Working-men, he felt could only be reached by working-men, and they would welcome this chance for self-improvement. Plater had accepted the arguments of Devas and Barry that ‘negative’ arguments were not enough to meet the challenge of Socialism. England even at this stage was still outside the developments in continental Catholicism and Plater had to look to the continent, especially to France and Belgium, for inspiration on how to tackle the social problem and reach out to the workers. He was in some ways, then, an innovator (although it should be noted that one of his co-founders of the Catholic Social Guild, Virginia Crawford, had earlier

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p.119

recommended that the Catholic Social Union should adopt a system of short retreats and monthly reunions, drawing her inspiration from the work of Père de Langermeersch and his *Ligue des Femmes Chrétiennes* at Brussels, in her 'Ideals of Charity' for the *Month* of May 1899).⁶³³ Despite this important advance, Plater remained true to tradition in two important ways. He never looked beyond 'social work' to legislative solutions to the problem of the poor; and he clung, like Devas, to a largely obsolete idea of the relations between employers and employed. As Doyle has remarked, 'We are back here in the world of small commercial or industrial enterprises, where the men knew their masters; it was not the world of the early twentieth century industrial giants, still less of the evolving international conglomerates'.⁶³⁴ Doyle has commented that Plater might be forgiven 'these occasional naivetés': but they were in fact somewhat fundamental when seen in their context of years of Catholic social teaching over-reliant on outmoded socio-economic models.

Despite the developments in thinking which can be demonstrated in some areas, it was nonetheless true that, just as at the beginning of this period the Catholic journals presented the return of the English nation to the Church as the 'only remedy' for the problem of the poor, the same belief was as firmly held at the end of this era and beyond. (Hilaire Belloc, in his *The Crisis of Our Civilization* of 1937, suggested that while the best practical help for the poor lay in the restoration of the guilds, the guilds were so much the product of Catholicism that they could not exist without it: therefore, he concluded, 'in the reconversion of our world to the Catholic standpoint is the only hope for the future').⁶³⁵ As a point of view, it was - is - consistent and logical. It is not necessary to quarrel with this view, or to seem to depreciate the efforts and the heart-searchings of the many Catholic workers and writers on the problem of the poor, in order to take a critical view of the Catholic contribution to the debate of the 1880s and 1890s. Nor would it be helpful to imply that the Church in England, small and overwhelmingly poor, was somehow at fault for failing to match the vigorous responses made by the Church in continental Europe to poverty and the threat of Socialism: the situations were not directly comparable. The English Catholic approach was most open to criticism, not in its inability to supply any unique contributions to solve the problem of the poor, but for its failure to look at the

⁶³³ 'Ideals of Charity', pp.466-468

⁶³⁴ Doyle, ('Charles Plater SJ'), *op. cit.*, p.415

⁶³⁵ Hilton, *op. cit.*, pp.101-102

problem of poverty squarely in all its modern aspects, to ask itself - and others - the most searching questions, and to frame the terms of the debate in any very clear or cogent way.

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